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Luther Theological Seminary

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THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM OF THE  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, 1917-1960

Lawrence J. Lystig

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THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM  
OF  
THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
1917-1960

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Luther Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Theology

by

Lawrence J. Lystig

April, 1977

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper was prepared while the author was participating in the Naval Postgraduate Educational Program. However, the author bears full responsibility for the contents and opinions expressed.

The intent of this paper is to demonstrate that the Evangelical Lutheran Church (formerly, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America), moved from a response to a wartime emergency situation to a continuing involvement in ministry to the armed forces of the United States. The emergency situation was first of all World War I. World War II was in many respects a repetition of World War I, particularly in the ways in which the church responded to it. But by the time a stalemate had developed in the Korean conflict, the church had become committed to a continuing involvement in ministry to the men and women of the armed services.

This paper will discuss the formation and work of the various agencies the church developed in order to carry out its ministry to the military. The work and opinion of some of the church's chaplains will be highlighted.

Only the work of the church's military chaplains will be discussed. Not discussed will be the work of those who, for example, serve as chaplains in Veterans Administration hospitals, in prisons, or at homes for the aged.



In particular, this paper will deal with the work of those men who served as military chaplains in the armed forces of Canada and the United States during the years 1917-1960 and who were clergymen of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America (NLCA). The NLCA came into existence in June, 1917, the result of a three-part merger of the Norwegian Lutheran churches in America. In 1946 the NLCA renamed itself the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC). The ELC became a part of the new American Lutheran Church 1 January 1961.

Clergymen, known as "chaplains," have accompanied the armed forces of nations since ancient times. The term "Chaplain" is itself of medieval origin and has been defined as "an ecclesiastic attached to the chapel of a royal court, college, etc., or to a military unit."<sup>1</sup> In this paper "chaplain" will refer to those clergymen who serve with military units.

Clergymen, both as chaplains and as regular soldiers and sailors, served in the armed forces of the new world from the time of its discovery.

Lutheran churches, both in America and abroad, have traditionally sought to minister to the armed forces of their particular countries. The esteem of the Augsburg Confession (Art. XVI) for the profession of the soldier<sup>2</sup> may well help account for such concern.

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<sup>1</sup>The American College Dictionary, 1964 ed. s.v. "Chaplain."

<sup>2</sup>Theodore G. Tappert, The Book of Concord, trans. and ed. In collaboration with Jaroslav Pelikan, Robert H. Fischer, and Arthur C. Piepkorn (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 37. See also Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church, 1965, s.v. "Military Personnel (The Lutheran Church's Concern For)", by Engebret O. Midboe.



It is known that Lutheran pastors served in the armed forces of the colonies during the Revolutionary War (1775-1783).<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the first Norwegian Lutheran pastor to serve as a chaplain in the armed forces of the United States was Claus L. Clausen, who accompanied Colonel Hans Christian Illeg of the Fifteenth Wisconsin, "a predominantly Norwegian regiment of the Federal Army"<sup>2</sup> during the Civil War (1861-1865). From then on, more and more Lutheran chaplains have served the members of the armed forces for varying periods of time. The comments of H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams are pertinent:

In the last century an increasing specialization of ministries has developed as the churches have continued to follow the historical practice of seeking people out wherever they are. As American society has become increasingly institutionalized, the churches have sent more and more ministers into institutions of various types.

Chaplains have served in the armed forces in ever-increasing numbers, many for a short period of time - especially during war - others for the entire length of their ministries.<sup>3</sup>

The institution of the military chaplaincy in the United States greatly changed during the period under discussion (1917-1960). Prior to that time, the chaplain corps of the various armed service branches scarcely existed. In 1960 there was a Chief of Chaplains at the head of Chaplain Corps of each branch. A new branch, the Air Force, had been added.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>August R. Suelflow and E. Clifford Nelson, "Sectionalism, Conflict, and Synthesis," in The Lutherans in North America, ed: E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 240.

<sup>3</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams, eds., The Ministry in Historical Perspective (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 271.



And in a like manner, the church in 1960 had a director and a commission directly responsible for the care and supervision of its military chaplains, while prior to 1917 the president of the church exercised alone, if at all, such functions.

And, as a long-time chaplain pointed out:

Previous to World War I, chaplains in a limited number were appointed, commissioned, and assigned to duty with little or no military training or instruction. Some were political appointees. Army appointments were made by the office of the Adjutant General and Navy appointments by the Secretary of the Navy with little regard to the appointee's theological training or qualifications or denominational membership. They were left to shift for themselves without supervision and little recognition save that which each chaplain could gain for himself by and through his own initiative and personal achievements.<sup>1</sup>

The writer of the fore-going was Rev. Dr. Gynther Storaasli, who at the time he wrote was the director of the Military Chaplaincy Commission of the ELC and who had served as a military chaplain for thirty years. He had been the Army's Chief of Chaplains for one of those years and had also, after retiring from the Army, served as executive secretary of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel of the former National Lutheran Council (NLC). He had begun his work as a military chaplain in 1918 and thus truly knew whereof he spoke. Since he retired as director of the Military Chaplaincy Commission at the end of 1960, his active years of work cover precisely the period that is being discussed, with the exception of 1917, and he plays a particularly prominent role in the situation.

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<sup>1</sup>Chaplain (Col) Gynther Storaasli, USA, Ret., Director, Military Chaplaincy Commission (ELC), "The spiritual contribution of the church to the men and women in the armed forces," Military Chaplaincy Commission Files, Archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Luther Theological Seminary Library, St. Paul, Minnesota.



Footnote citations have been abbreviated as follows.

Those materials which are found in the files of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare, which are located in the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism in New York, will be denoted as "NLCSSW - Archives of CL." Materials found in the files of the National Lutheran Council, which are also located in the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism, will be denoted as "NLC - Archives of CL." Materials found in the files of the Service Men's Commission which are also located in the Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism will be denoted as "SC - Archives of CL." Materials found in the files of the Division of Service to Military Personnel, which is a part of the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A. and is located at Washington, D.C., will be denoted as "DSMP - LUCUSA." Materials found in the files of the Military Chaplaincy Commission, which are a part of the Archives of The Evangelical Lutheran Church, located at the Luther Theological Seminary Library, Saint Paul, Minnesota, will be denoted as "MCC - Archives of the ELC." And other materials found in the Archives of the ELC will be denoted as "Archives of the ELC."



## CHAPTER ONE

### THE GREAT CRUSADE, WORLD WAR I (1917-1918)

War, which had been raging in Europe since 1914, became a matter of urgent national concern for the United States Friday, 6 April 1917. On that day the United States declared war on the Central Powers of Europe. The United States had become officially committed to World War I. Canada, a part of the British Empire, had been involved since 1914.

It might be too much to say that "...events in the second decade of the centure point to major shifts in western history,"<sup>1</sup> but there can be no doubt that those events were the forerunner of a time of troubles that has not ended.<sup>2</sup>

In the world of church affairs, 1917 was also a momentous year. Marking as it did the 400th anniversary of the Reformation, it was a spur to decided changes in the organizations of Lutheran churches in the United States and Canada. Before the year had ended, Lutherans had found themselves in newly merged church bodies and also had discovered that they could work together in ways they had deemed impossible. Most Norwegian Lutherans had celebrated on June 9-10, 1917, the formation of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America. Those

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick K. Wentz, Lutherans in Concert (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1968), p. 1. <sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*



same Norwegian-Americans, many of them, before the year had ended, were working together with Lutherans of many different ethnic backgrounds in the effort to minister to the rapidly growing armed forces of the United States.

An extended excursus needs to be made at this point. Until after the church merger of 1961, many of the Lutheran churches in Canada, especially in the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, were a part of the NLCA/ELC. Certainly work must have been done on behalf of the Canadian armed forces during and after World War I. However, so far as can be determined, no chaplains of the NLCA served in the Canadian forces until 1940.

As Lutheran men joined in the great crusade to "make the world safe for Democracy," to quote President Wilson, the church searched for ways to be of effective service to them. To the leaders of the Lutheran churches in America, it quickly became apparent that some form of organization needed to be set up in order to properly coordinate and manager the various efforts that were being made and planned.

One of the efforts that needed supervision and support was the work of Lutheran military chaplains. Prior to the beginning of hostilities for the United States in 1917, there were four commissioned Lutheran chaplains in the Army and Navy.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. J. A. O. Stub, "Report of the Executive Secretary," Reports of Officers and Committees at the Second Annual Meeting of The National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare (New York: National Lutheran Commission, 1918), p. 24.



One, Army Chaplain M. M. Londahl,<sup>1</sup> had entered the service in 1909 and was the only chaplain in the new NLCA when it was formed that year. By the time the war ended on November 11, 1917, eighty-nine Lutheran chaplains had served on active duty,<sup>2</sup> of whom nine belonged to the NLCA.<sup>3</sup>

Writing out of his own experience as a chaplain during those days, Dr. Gynther Storaasli said:

Army chaplain candidates . . . were enlisted as privates, sent to a Chaplain School, so called, taught the rudiments of military courtesy, close-order drill and equitation and given a smattering of instruction in Army Regulations, Courts Martial procedures and Map Reading. At the end of thirty days each candidate was required to preach a trial sermon of ten minutes duration on a text of his own choosing. If the chaplain was still warm and breathing at the conclusion of his sermon effort, he was commissioned a chaplain with the rank of 1st Lieutenant, and sent forth into the bewildering wilderness of an armed camp, his equipment a Bible, a chaplain's flag and his native talents. Henceforth he was on his own. In those hectic days the people most interested in the chaplaincy were the chaplains themselves.<sup>4</sup>

That may have been true for the chaplaincy as a whole. But the Lutheran churches did take an interest in the chaplains. Responding to their needs, some of the churches took the unprecedented step of forming an association to work together to meet the common need.

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<sup>1</sup>Report from Marinium M. Londahl, 17 July 1922, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>The Lutheran World Almanac for 1921, s.v. "Chaplains."

<sup>3</sup>Reports of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare, 17 July 1922, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>4</sup>Storaasli, p. 2.



## Formation and Work of the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare

Thus the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was formed on October 19, 1917.<sup>1</sup> As the writer of its history has pointed out, "It was a remarkable organization which only dire emergency could have effected, since it represented all Lutheran bodies except those of the Synodical Conference."<sup>2</sup> Equally remarkable and precedent-setting was the fact that the Conference, which organized its own Army and Navy Board, was able to cooperate with the Commission at a number of points.<sup>3</sup>

A wave of enthusiasm for the war was sweeping the country, and the Lutheran churches shared, in varying degrees, in it. Unquestionably, the fever of wartime patriotism, the exhilaration of the successful merger of the Norwegian-Lutheran churches, and the pride engendered by the remembrance of the Reformation all contributed to the amazing success of the Commission's appeal for funds. By February, 1918, \$1,350,000 had been raised in response to an unprecedented inter-Lutheran campaign.<sup>4</sup>

With its funds the Commission set to work. Two officials of the NLCA were especially involved in its work, Dr. J. A. O. Stub, executive secretary of the Commission, and the son of the President of the NLCA, and Dr. Lauritz Larsen as Secretary.

Dr. Lauritz Larsen soon found himself in active and continuing contact with the national government at Washington, D.C.

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<sup>1</sup>Wentz, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



The number of chaplains was increasing at a tremendous rate. Where at the outbreak of the war there were only seventy-four Regular Army and seventy-two National Guard chaplains, during the period of warfare, lasting not quite two years, over 2,300 chaplains were commissioned in the Army.<sup>1</sup> The government was anxious to handle all matters concerning the chaplains and the churches through one agency. Partly in response to this desire of the government, the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, representing most Protestant church bodies in the states, organized the General War-Time Commission of the Churches on September 20, 1917, and charged it with the responsibility of ". . . securing the appointment of an adequate number of well qualified Army and Navy chaplains and assuring them of the united support of the churches in the endeavors to have them provided with equipment, rank and organization adequate to the effective performance of their duties . . ."<sup>2</sup> Writing at a later date in order to correct some misapprehensions about the Commission, an editor said:

The General Commission was established in 1917 and is comprised of 35 Protestant denominations. It is an independent religious agency incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia as a permanent conference on the chaplaincy. As the major coordinating instrument for Protestant chaplaincy concerns, it is not organic to but works cooperatively with the National Council of Churches (successor to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America), the American

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<sup>1</sup>The Military Chaplaincy, A Report to the President by the President's Committee on Religion and Welfare in the Armed Forces, October 1, 1950 (Washington, D.C.).

<sup>2</sup>Margaret Renton, ed., War-Time Agencies of the Churches (New York: General War-Time Commission of the churches, 1919), p. 154.



Bible Society, American Leprosy Missions, Inc., and similar agencies. Lutheran, Southern Baptist, and other religious groups contribute to the commission's support. Chaplaincy executives of these bodies are consultants to the commission and share in its spring and fall meetings.<sup>1</sup>

The General Commission was recognized by the government and by ". . . agreement with the War Department this committee undertook the task of investigating all applications for chaplaincies from Protestant ministers, the Department agreeing ordinarily to appoint only those recommended by the Committee."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Lauritz Larsen was a member of this Committee.<sup>3</sup> Even so, the Lutherans were not satisfied with this arrangement. It is a likely conjecture that the Lutheran Commission on Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was organized in order to preserve and prosecute Lutheran interests vis-a-vis the national government and other Protestant bodies. As Wentz has noted:

One primary reason for creation of the Commission was to provide Lutherans with united representation before the national government. For this purpose a office was maintained at Washington with the Reverend Lauritz Larsen in charge.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, Dr. Lauritz Larsen sat on two committees at the same time, both having allegedly the welfare of the chaplains as one of their main concerns. The Rev. Charles F. Steck, who was the representative of the Synodical Conference, wrote in appreciation of the Federal Council's work:

The Washington office has initiated and furthered legislation affecting army and navy chaplaincies. It has been in large measure the medium through which the

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<sup>1</sup>A. Ray Applequist, ed., Church, State and Chaplaincy (Washington: General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel, 1969), p. 99.

<sup>2</sup>Renton, p. 187.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 186      <sup>4</sup>Wentz, p. 11.



Churches have been able to obtain a hearing in the military departments of the government. It has been the most potent influence in securing the cooperation of the Roman Catholic Chaplaincy Bureau, which in some cases, has been of the greatest value, and inuring the claims of the Churches upon both the Congress and the Departments. It has been the chief factor in keeping the appointment of chaplains free from political influence, by making of the office a clearing-house for the various chaplaincy committees, and in arranging with the heads of the Army and Navy Departments to appoint as chaplains only such applicants as are approved by the committee representing the denomination from which the applicant comes, as well as by the representatives of the Federal Council.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the Federal Council represented the churches' concerns before the government, the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare (NLCSSW) was primarily interested in representing and caring for the individual Lutheran chaplains and service people in their relationships with their church.

That interest was not a pro-forma one either, certainly not so far as Dr. J. A. O. Stub was concerned. In a very revealing letter he wrote to Chaplain T. A. Hoff he said:

First of all let me thank you for your support of our Commission and its work and the offer you made to stir up some more interest in the chaplain's work among our pastors.

Both by letter and through addresses I have tried to impress upon our people the need of just this work and I hasten to assure you that if it were not for certain conditions which I do not like to put down on paper, I would have made an application as a chaplain myself long ago. As it is possibly I am able to do a little something although I realize with longing heart how I would like to be in the thick of it over here or over there.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Charles F. Steck to Dr. Knubel, 14 November 1917,  
NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>J. A. O. Stub to Chaplain T. A. Hoff, 22 July 1918,  
NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



The NLCSSW out of its resources provided generously for the needs of the chaplains. These were described by Stub as follows:

In order to assist the chaplains in their work with the men, the following equipment, which is common to many denominations, is offered each chaplain:

1. Motorcycle with side car.
2. Corona typewriter in case.
3. Field Communion set.
4. Pocket Communion set.
5. As many Army and Navy Service Books as requested, here and abroad. (Chaplains' special edition, with marriage, confirmation, and baptismal rituals.)
6. All other literature, Testaments, Catechisms, etc., as requested, here and abroad.
7. Free stationery for self and men - as requested.
8. An allowance of \$100, called chaplains' emergency fund. The chaplain is expected to spend this for the men in cases of need and sickness. Upon accounting to us, another \$100 is immediately sent him, and so on. In cases of our chaplains on transport service, we have allowed \$200.<sup>1</sup>

The money for the work of the NLCSSW came from various sources, besides the fund drive. Dr. J. A. O. Stub told of how students had responded to an appeal he had made:

Am just back from a meeting at St. Olaf College where I had the privilege of dedicating their service flag which has 71 stars. The students alone subscribed \$950.00 in less than five minutes and with students yet to be heard from, will bring their quota considerably over 1000 dollars. Remember this does not include any faculty member. To me it seems an inspiring and remarkable instance of the interest our young people are taking in the work our church is now trying to perform.<sup>2</sup>

As noted earlier, there is no record of a NLCA chaplain serving with the Canadian forces in World War I. However, it is

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<sup>1</sup>Stub, Reports, pp. 24-25.

<sup>2</sup>J. A. O. Stub to C. M. Jacobs, 8 February 1918,  
NLCSSW - Archives to CL.



known that the NLCSSW was considering a Canadian edition of the Service Book,<sup>1</sup> also that on May 22nd, 1918, the Canadian Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare was organized in Ottawa under the same general charter and rules under which the States Commission operated. Rev. J. A. O. Stub was one of those who was present and helped in its organization. Reports from the Canadians showed that they had obtained the appointment of one Lutheran chaplain with the Canadian army.<sup>2</sup> Who he was and if he ever served is not now known.

One of the great tasks of the NLCSSW became the recruitment of chaplains. In an undated letter addressed to the Synodical Presidents of the Lutheran Church, the Vice Chairman, Prof. Charles M. Jacobs, appealed for chaplains and supplied the criteria they had to meet:

The men who are recommended should be men of the highest ability. They should have had at least two years of pastoral experience and shown that they know how to reach and hold young men. Under the present law they must be less than forty years of age, but there is a strong probability that the age limit will be raised within the next few weeks, so that men past forty but under forty-five will be eligible. The War Department will not consider any candidates who were born in any of the countries with which we are at war, and a foreign accent of any sort is an effective bar to usefulness in this work.<sup>3</sup>

It can be imagined that the last requirement, especially, ruled out many men of the NLCA who might have otherwise applied, since, for example, English language services were notable by their

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<sup>1</sup>C. M. Jacobs to J. A. O. Stub, 23 August 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup> Stub, Reports, pp. 42-43.

<sup>3</sup>C. M. Jacobs, undated letter addressed to the Synodical Presidents of the Lutheran Church, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



paucity, and the reports of the NLCA were almost all printed in the Norwegian language.

That there was little acceptable response from potential Norwegian Lutheran chaplains is indicated by the following excerpt from a letter which Jacobs wrote to Stub on June 14, 1918:

Here is the list of Norwegian applicants down to date. At your suggestion I have written others from time to time, but they have not come across with applications; usually they have not replied at all. We must have more men. In fact we ought to be ready to furnish fifteen available candidates a month for the next six months. In May we furnished ten, so far June has given us eight. Our only consolation is that other churches are not getting men any faster than we are.<sup>1</sup>

Stub himself was trying to get men from the NLCA to become chaplains. And he did his best to encourage any who were considering entering the work. Thus, on October 10, 1917, shortly after the formation of the NLCSSW, upon hearing of the interest of Rev. John H. Fjelstad, Stub wrote to him, saying:

Would it be possible for you, or let me say, would it be justifiable for you, to leave your home and your work either as a chaplain, in which case you would have to resign from your present charge, . . . .?  
. . . . I thank you for your kind interest in this work - especially your sympathetic understanding of the needs and temptations of our soldier boys. I wonder if our Church realizes the great opportunity that lies before it.<sup>2</sup>

Stub's concern that the Church respond favorably to the opportunity that faced it was echoed by a NLCA chaplain, T. A. Hoff, when he wrote to the NLCSSW, "I am beginning to

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<sup>1</sup>Jacobs to Stub, 14 June 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Stub to Fjelstad, 10 October 1917, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



believe that the Lutheran church would act wisely (underlining in the original) if she would push more suitable men into the chaplaincy . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the war, the number of applicants continued to be a source of concern, but with the cessation of hostilities the need ceased and, indeed, the NLCSSW itself passed out of existence in 1922. But although the NLCSSW did not supply its quota of chaplains, shortly after the end of the war, the Secretary, Rev. Lauritz Larsen, reported that ". . . our church would have had almost its full quota of Chaplains in the army if all those who have made application had been appointed . . . . We also believe, that if the war had continued, our church would have furnished its full quota of Chaplains."<sup>2</sup> Just how quickly things changed is shown by the fact that four days before the signing of the armistice, 800 more chaplains of all denominations were thought to be needed in France alone, but when the armistice was signed, the War Department at once issued an order that no new commissions should be granted.<sup>3</sup>

Men entering the service as chaplains found that there was little guidance to be found any where as to what they were to do. Storaasli recalled that:

Those of us who entered the Army as chaplains in World War I found our duties far from clearly defined-in regulations, in the minds of our commanding officers,

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<sup>1</sup>Chaplain T. A. Hoff to Rev. H. R. Gold, 12 March 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. Lauritz Larsen, "Chaplaincy Committee" Report to the National Lutheran Commission for Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare, November, 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



or even in our own minds. We had volunteered for service with the troops. We knew that spiritual guidance to officers and men and ministration to the sick and wounded were expected of us. What else? I can think of units where, if the chaplain conducted worship on Sunday, visited those in the hospital and guardhouse, performed an occasional marriage or baptism, and conducted the prescribed services for dead, nothing more was asked of him than that he keep out of the way and not interfere with the administration or activities of the troops.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that the military chaplaincy in World War I was but a shadow of what it was to become, but the comments by Storaasli throw a different light on the observation of a historian that during that conflict "The few chaplains were really more recreational officers than spiritual shepherds."<sup>2</sup>

#### Comments of Chaplains

Certainly the surviving written comments by NLCA chaplains who served in World War I do not substantiate that charge. On the contrary, their comments reveal an honest desire to serve the troops in a meaningful way as a chaplain, however poorly the duties may have been defined. And their comments reveal they both found and made many opportunities to do so.

The letters which one NLCA chaplain, Gustav Stearns, wrote to his congregation, which granted him a leave of absence during the war, were later printed in book form by Augsburg

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<sup>1</sup>Chaplain (Colonel) Gynther Storaasli, "How the Chaplaincy Has Developed," reprinted from Army Information Digest, Lutheran Herald, January 30, 1951, pp. 107-108.

<sup>2</sup>Fred W. Meuser, "Celebration, War, and the Great Change," in The Lutherans in North America, ed: E. Clifford Nelson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 401.



Publishing House, the publication agency of the NLCA. Stearns wrote a total of seventy-six letters to the Church of Ascension, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, once a week for every week he was in the Army. In the Foreward to the Fourth Edition of the book, published in 1929, the editor said that ". . . Some of these letters were printed in the daily papers and attracted a great deal of attention. Hundreds of soldiers and civilians requested that the letters be printed in book form."<sup>1</sup> In one of his first letters, dated December 12, 1917, Stearns wrote that:

Every Sunday morning I conduct outdoor church services for the officers and men of my regiment. In the afternoon I visit the sick soldiers in the base hospital near here. On weekdays I go to the base hospital every morning, and in the afternoon I must attend the school of equitation for all mounted officers. This is where we get our thrill in horse-back riding. Nearly every evening I must attend lectures on military topics. All officers, both mounted and unmounted, are required to be present at these lectures.<sup>2</sup>

Stearns did have some extraneous duty from time to time. In his December 19, 1917 letter he spoke of having been given the responsibility of picking up express packages for the troops, some 3,500 of them in his regiment, and seeing that the packages were given to postmen for prompt distribution.<sup>3</sup> And later he was given the job of censuring the men's letters.

The comments of Regular Army Chaplain Londahl were of help to the NLCSSW as they were preparing an Army and Navy

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<sup>1</sup>Gustav Stearns, From Army Camps and Battle-Fields, 4th ed. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1929).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



Service Book. Among other things, Londahl suggested that the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and the Doxology should be printed on the inside of the back cover. He felt that the National Flag should appear somewhere in the book; that with it, preferably on the back of the cover, should be also the chaplain's field crosses and the Lutheran button. And together with Stub and Larsen he felt that two hymns which were very popular among Norwegian Lutherans should be incorporated in the book. Those two hymns were: "O Happy Day When We Shall Stand," and "Abide in Grace, Lord Jesus." Two other hymns which he felt were desirable were "God Be With You Till We Meet Again" and "In The Cross of Christ I Glory."<sup>1</sup>

The Army and Navy Service Books were published, and indicative of how they were received is this excerpt from a letter written by NLCA Chaplain Norman A. Madson:

The Army and Navy Service Books finally came, and I hasten to acknowledge their receipt . . .

I am now well supplied with song books for the present, but may have to ask for more later on. The boys certainly appreciate the work the Commission is doing for them. After they have enjoyed the singing of the old familiar tunes, it is not an uncommon thing to hear them say, "Why, this is just like getting home again." And they mean it.

Again thanking you for your prompt and generous help in making the regimental service what every Lutheran chaplain wants it to be ---- the homelike service ----, . . ."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Larsen, in his letter to Jacobs dated November 26, 1917, includes these comments of Londahl. Evidently Londahl had visited Stub and Larsen. The letter is in the NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Norman A. Madson to The National Lutheran Commission, 29 October 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



In response to an earlier letter of Madson, William Freas, Office Secretary of the NLCSSW, described the field communion set which was made available for every chaplain served by the NLCSSW as ". . . absolutely the finest thing of its kind which our chaplains have ever seen," and consisting of the chalice, paten, glass flagon, wafer box and spoon.<sup>1</sup>

Another NLCA chaplain, Alfred Hendrickson, had written the NLCSSW apparently asking for an individual Communion set. In his reply to him, Freas also indicated an interesting way in which Communion was to be administered:

Concerning the individual Communion set, however, I would like to write you before sending you what asked for. We have not yet equipped any of our one hundred chaplains with an individual Communion set. We have a field set which is a little beauty which we provide for our men, which has the common cup. We then provide paper Communion cups for those who prefer them but rather recommend to our chaplains that they administer the Communion by intinction, dipping the wafer into the wine and administering with both words of institution at once.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the fact that the war soon ended after those words were written was the reason, but at any rate no other discussion arose about the method of administering Communion. The recommended practice, if that was what it was, seems to be highly irregular. Perhaps the people at the NLCSSW and whichever chaplains heard of it were willing to let the excuse of war-time need be sufficient for what would seem otherwise to be a highly

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<sup>1</sup>Freas to Chaplain N. A. Madson, 10 September 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Freas to Chaplain Alfred Hendrickson, 5 September 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



controversial matter. The writer is aware of the fact that whether or not to use the common cup or to use individual cups was greatly debated in years past; but this note is the first he has encountered where he has seen the practice of intinction recommended for Lutherans as a seemingly regular practice.

But Lutheran chaplains did not throw out all their practices just because they found themselves in a war-time setting, in an Army camp, rather than serving a peace-time civilian parish. Writing down his observations, Chaplain Hoff said that, "Lutheran chaplains will not lend themselves to some things and I am sure they will not be a discredit to the service."<sup>1</sup>

And it is in a letter from Hoff, perhaps, that the reason is given for the particular selection of equipment that was made by the NLCSSW to give to chaplains:

Every chaplain ought to be supplied with a small typewriter. There is a great amount of correspondence in the chaplain's work and he cannot make very good use of the assistant which Army Regulations entitle him to unless he has a typewriter. I, for one, cannot afford to buy a machine myself.

I do not know what experience other chaplains may have had, but I should like very much to be supplied with a goodly supply of little devotional booklets, pamphlets or tracts for free distribution, especially among the sick in the Base Hospital . . .

Then again - I hardly dare to mention it - but I am sure most every chaplain could increase his efficiency for service by having a motorcycle side car or little runabout. What a timesaver and how many splendid little services he could thus render both to officers and men.

These are only suggestions, but I am convinced that they are worthy of careful consideration. Supplied with these and other things the Lutheran chaplains would be placed in a position to take rank with any other chaplains in the service.

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<sup>1</sup>Hoff to Gold, 12 March 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



May I also add that a small communion set should be supplied to each chaplain.<sup>1</sup>

As has already been noted, it was exactly the things that Hoff mentioned that were supplied to each NLCSSW chaplain.

#### Reactions of the Officials of the NLCSSW

That the NLCSSW immediately responded to Hoff's request and the impression it made is indicated by his next letter:

. . . I cannot refrain from writing to tell you what a proud moment it was for me last Thursday at the monthly meeting of the chaplains in this camp when I could tell the others present that the church to which I belong is providing its quota of chaplains with a full Standard Equipment - and also a substantial emergency fund. We have five denominations represented besides the Lutheran and there is not one of them that, as yet, has done anything worth mentioning in support of their chaplains.

The little proud boast that I was able to make in that meeting opened the eyes of all those men and gave them a new view of the Lutheran Church."<sup>2</sup>

The Norwegian Lutheran chaplains were well thought of by the officials of the NLCSSW. Jacobs saw fit to write to Stub with the following comment:

Rahn writes me that there are twenty-three Lutherans in the present school at Taylor. He says that they are a good lot, and speaks especially of the five Norwegian men as fine fellows.<sup>3</sup>

The NCLSSW was looking for any means possible to publicize the work of and need for chaplains. Apparently shortly after Jacobs wrote to Stub, an article was prepared about the Chaplaincy School, which the Army had established. Stub wrote to Jacobs: "I think that article on the Chaplaincy School is a

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<sup>1</sup>T.A. Hoff to National Lutheran Commission, 29 April 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>T.A. Hoff to Rev. Wm. Freas, 14 May 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Jacobs to Stub, 18 July 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



dandy. I hope that every church paper will publish it."<sup>1</sup>

But as has already been noted, Storaasli at least did not think too much of the school. The impression he leaves is that the school was more a paper-shuffling drill than an adequate means of preparing civilian pastors to be military chaplains.

Someone suggested to the Chairman of the NLCSSW, Dr. F. H. Knubel, that every chaplains needed a \$2000 emergency fund. Knubel disagreed vigorously.

What we need to do for the Chaplains is to secure for them an adequate opportunity to use their personal influence with the men. The idea that we can equip a Chaplain by giving him money to spend is absurd. The right kind of man can spend the money wisely and we ought not to stint him when the time actually comes that he is in need of cash. But equipment with adequate rank seems to me to be the first and most necessary thing.<sup>2</sup>

Jacob's opinion carried the day. Chaplains continued to be supplied with the standard items of equipment and \$100 to be used for emergency purposes.<sup>3</sup> An additional sum of \$200 was loaned to incoming chaplains to enable them to purchase personal equipment.<sup>4</sup>

But in the last sentence Jacobs referred to a matter that was a cause of great difficulty for some chaplains during the war. The issue was a two-part one. Apparently the War Department suggested that the cross insignia of the chaplain should

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<sup>1</sup>Stub to Jacobs, 24 August 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Jacobs to Knubel, 30 September 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Freas to Fjelstad, 14 August 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>4</sup>Fjelstad to Jacobs, 8 August 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



be replaced by a shepherd's crook and that all insignia of rank should be removed. In other words, only the shepherd's crook would denote that the person wearing the uniform was a chaplain, and there would be no indication of military rank apparent on the uniform. Neither an official of the NLCSSW, Jacobs, nor a NLCA Chaplain, Hoff, liked the proposal.

Hoff wrote to the NLCSSW on July 17, 1918 saying:

There is also another matter in which I wish to enlist the support of the Commission. There has developed from some source a movement to rob the chaplain of his insignia of rank. This movement has, no doubt, come to your attention already but I wish to present it to you from the chaplain's point of view in the hope that you can use your influence to counteract the movement or, if possible, enter a vigorous protest.

One of the stock arguments advanced in favor of the removal of the insignia is that the chaplain is only a minister of the Gospel laboring under military conditions. This is absolutely true, of course, and no one would argue against that point. But the same argument is equally true in the case of medical doctors, dentists, and veterinarians, and still nobody has seemed to regard it necessary to rob them of their insignia of rank.

Why should the chaplains' be singled out for this humiliation any more than others whose status is on the same plane. It is not an easy matter for anyone outside of the military establishment to understand the full significance of such a drastic move but the chaplains well know that, it means practically a knockout blow to the chaplaincy, unless we get more Utopian conditions into the army than we now have.

Instead of removing the insignia of rank, the chaplains' rank ought to be increased, for in the army the insignia of rank speak a language which is peculiarly one of its own and which people on the outside cannot fully grasp the importance of. I am certain, that if the policy of taking the chaplain's insignia of rank from him is carried out, it will work difficulties for the chaplaincy that the instigators of this movement cannot understand. So I appeal to the National Commission of the Lutheran Church to use all the influence it may possess to counteract this move.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Foss to Freas, 17 July 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



Stub responded to Hoff's letter immediately and indicated his sharp displeasure and also what he had done in order to try to counteract it:

I am very much disturbed at the action of the War Department in regard to removing chaplains' insignia of rank. At the last meeting of the Federal Council this matter was discussed and it was very plain that the Federal Council was unanimous in its disapproval of this act. I assure you, Hoff, that everything that can be done by the church to strengthen the chaplains' position is being done. I cannot see the logic for that action.

At the same meeting there came up a notification that even the cross is to be removed and a shepherd's crook given the chaplain as an insignia in place. Vigorous language was used in regard to this and I am now very glad to have official notice through the Federal Council that the chaplain will retain the cross.<sup>1</sup>

When at a later time Jacobs wrote to Knubel, he indicated that he too had come to feel strongly about the matter:

Answering your inquiry about the War Department removing the insignia of the Chaplains, I would say that I am emphatically opposed to that order. I had an open mind on the subject until my visit to Louisville, when Major Pruden entirely converted me to the Army Chaplain's point of view. The fact of the matter is that the loss of position among officers entailed by removing the insignia, more than offsets any advantage that the Chaplain may have in his work among the men. The whole thing seems to be a favorite scheme of Bishop Brent, and I think that we ought to cooperate with all the other Church Bodies in an energetic protest to the War Department against the proposed measure. If we enter a protest it should be made very strong.

The same thing is true as regards the rank of Chaplains. It is an outrage that the most poorly equipped saw-bones that I ever saw should have the rank of Major in the Army after one year of service, while the best man whom we can put into a Chaplaincy cannot become a Captain until he has served for seven years. The consequence of this lower rank is that the Chaplain is looked down upon in the Army, and is without the authority that he needs to have in order

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<sup>1</sup>Stub to Hoff, 22 July 1918.



to command the religious situation. The Army is following a policy of diametrically opposed to that of the Navy, where the rank of the Chaplain has been increased, with the result that the Chaplain ranks as high as the Doctor or other professional man who is serving in that branch.<sup>1</sup>

The comments of Jacobs are enlightening as to the attitudes and practices of the time; that is why they have been quoted so extensively. But it is curious that Jacobs and, apparently, Knubel either did not know of or paid no heed to the opinion of Stub, particularly since Stub had repeated in a letter to Hoff dated August 10, 1918, that the cross insignia would not be changed. Apparently Stub too had checked to see what the chaplains were doing and thinking: "You of course are aware of the fact that the cross insignia will not be changed, and it was not I believe with the goodwill of the Church of America that the insignia of rank was removed. I notice that a number of chaplains still wear their insignia of rank but some others have removed theirs."<sup>2</sup>

The whole matter of the chaplains having and wearing insignia of rank has long been debated. But the comments of the United Presbyterian Church, in its report on the Military Chaplaincy, as it studied the experiences of the chaplains and others during World War I, are revealing:

The reason for the assignment of rank for chaplains comes out of a long history. Before and during World War I there were chaplains who had no rank, and they found, as did the Red Cross men, that they were regarded by the military as accessories with no standing and of

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<sup>1</sup>Jacobs

<sup>2</sup>Stub to Hoff, 10 August 1918, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



questionable value. When things needed to be done for the men, the chaplains had no power that would provide a basis of action. Only those avenues of help or correction were open that the exceptional personality might be able to create within a given situation. Rank was given to chaplains to introduce order into a confused situation and to give the chaplain a legitimate voice within 'the establishment'.<sup>1</sup>

So far as can be determined, the NLCA never wavered in its support of its chaplains on this issue.

Although no men of the NLCA served as Navy chaplains during World War I, and none did until 1940, mention should be made of what developed in that branch at that time, since those practices have, by and large, continued to the present day. A report to the President noted that

During World War I, a Chaplains Division with a Director of Chaplains was established, and the first Chaplain's manual was written. Also during Word War I, many additional duties such as care of ship's libraries, Navy Relief and ship's recreation arose which were assigned to the chaplain and which have remained with him as collateral duties ever since.<sup>2</sup>

It is apparent then, that during World War I a chaplain, whether he was in the Army or the Navy, could find himself doing many other things besides preaching, teaching, and visiting the sick. That was true even despite the fact that the number of men that he was expected to serve in the military was usually far greater than he would have encountered in a typical one-pastor parish setting. In 1918 one chaplain was to serve 1,200 men. The ratio was determined by congress, and still is. But, as has been reported, ". . . actually the number of chaplains

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<sup>1</sup>Applequist, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>Report to the President, p. 7.



was only half the authorized strength."<sup>1</sup>

During World War I the chaplains sometimes found themselves in competition with the Y M C A, and the experience was usually distasteful. Thus Hoff wrote that:

Every chaplain is very apt to experience, what I have experienced that some Y M C A secretaries come into what they call "War Work" imbued with the idea that they are called upon to run the whole United States Army and that they need not take any notice of anybody except the Colonel.

Now, it happens that Army Regulations give certain rights to the chaplains, and these rights he can claim if he has the back-bone to do so.

But the trouble is that, while the Gov't. grants him certain authority it does not back him up financially so he can carry out his plans. Take for instance, in the matter of entertainment and recreational activities one is almost helpless if he has no funds. The Y M C A men come along into a regiment backed by funds and equipment and simply take possession and the chaplain is forced to stand helplessly by and look on.<sup>2</sup>

Another NLCA Chaplain, Carl L. Foss, was even more forceful in his denunciation of the Y M C A:

We are not in favor of having the Y.M.C.A. coming in here. No one has any use for that organization, the soldiers are very bitter towards it. I haven't heard one good word spoken for the Y but plenty of adverse and bitter criticism. Personally I want nothing to do with them. They have been of no service to me, have had only unpleasant experiences with them. The Y can try all it wants to white wash itself over there in the States but they will never succeed, the returning soldiers will tend to that. Every man over here has seen enough of that layout to be done with them for ever after. It is a pity that they have succeeded so thoroughly to bamboozle so much money out of the pockets of the people. The Y secretaries are having a fine trip over here and a big time on that money. A big bunch of their women are not any credit to them either. Nuff said.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Hoff to Freas, 17 July 1918.

<sup>3</sup>Foss to Stub, 21 March 1919, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



Perhaps Foss was reacting simply to his own bitter experiences, but the matter is worth noting. Every so often since World War I, suggestions have been made that military chaplains should no longer be military officers, but should serve in some such capacity as Y secretaries. The NLCA never supported such proposals. Perhaps the reactions of Hoff and Foss were the reason.

When the war ended suddenly on November 11, 1918, some of the NLCA chaplains, as soon as possible, returned to civilian life. Perhaps the record for shortness of time of service for all NLCA chaplains was held by Norman A. Madson, who was on active duty for just over three months, September 5, 1918, to December 12, 1918.<sup>1</sup>

Officials of the NLCSSW were concerned about how to assist those men who wished to return to civilian life. A suggestion was made that some of the chaplains could be used to go on speaking tours of the churches to explain the work they and the NLCSSW did during the war.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not any NLCA churches were so contacted is not known.

At least one NLCA Chaplain, Fjelstad, did not want to leave the chaplaincy. He wrote and asked Stub if he was ". . . in a position to know what chance there is for the securing of permanent commissions as Chaplains by Lutherans just now?"<sup>3</sup> In his reply Stub said:

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<sup>1</sup>Reports of the NLCSSW, 1922.

<sup>2</sup>Freas to Jacobs, 17 June 1919, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Fjelstad to Stub, 24 January 1919, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



In regard to your application for service in the regular army I understand that this is more easily entered through your commanding officer. I understand everyone will be offered a chance if he wishes to remain in the regular army. You might ask your commanding officer for the regular form of application and fill in same and his recommendation will no doubt carry the matter through.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not Fjelstad did apply is not known; he was discharged from the service the same month Stub wrote his reply.

In the same letter to Fjelstad, Stub mentioned that Chaplain Storaasli had had dinner with him and had been appointed for transport service.<sup>2</sup> But that duty for Storaasli lasted only until July 24.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 1919 only Regular Army Chaplain Londahl remained on active duty.<sup>4</sup> Thus in two short years the course had gone full circle, for Londahl was the only Norwegian Lutheran chaplain when the NLCA was formed in 1917.

In 1919 Stub concluded his work with the military chaplains of the NLCA. Some of the other NLCA chaplains, how many is not known, did later enlist in the Reserves, among them Stears and Fjelstad.<sup>5</sup> But Stub was dead before any more NLCA chaplains would see active duty.

In retrospect, it is remarkable how quickly and how actively the NLCA became involved in the affairs of its military chaplains. Principally the NLCA did its work on behalf of its chaplains through the NLCSSW, which itself was instrumental in

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<sup>1</sup>Stub to Fjelstad, 3 February 1919, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.      <sup>4</sup>Reports of the NLCSSW, 1922.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



founding. And the depth of the concern of the NLCA, at least on the part of its officials, is shown by the fact that the son of the President of the NLCA, Rev. J. A. O. Stub, carried out an extensive work in the NLCSSW. And remarkable work was also done by another NLCA clergyman, Rev. Lauritz Larsen. Certainly the church was responding to the enthusiasm and needs of the times when it began its work, but noteworthy is both how well it did its work and what patterns it set for the future.

In the dawning days of World War II the NLCA was to draw heavily upon its experiences in World War I to determine the shape of its work. Of tremendous significance for the future was the fact that the NLCA chose to do most of its work in a cooperative inter-Lutheran agency, whose story has been told elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Already, notably in the case of the rank and insignia dispute, the NLCA had taken its first tentative steps toward involvement in the affairs of the national government in behalf of and because of its military chaplains. The NLCA may well have believed that with the signing of the armistice, its need to take any active steps on behalf of its chaplains was at an end, save for whatever "clean-up" details remained. And for most of the next era, the period between World War I and World War II, that was indeed true. For most of those years only one NLCA clergyman would be on active duty. But the pattern had been made, and in

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<sup>1</sup>See especially the books of Osborne Hauge, Lutherans Working Together (New York: National Lutheran Council, 1945), and Frederick K. Wentz, Lutherans in Concert (Augsburg Publishing House, 1968).



World War II the NLCA would find itself as fully involved in the affairs of the military chaplaincy as it had been during World War I.



## CHAPTER TWO

### TRANSITION (1919-1939)

After the 'Great War' had ended, the NLCA quickly withdrew from an involvement in the armed services of the United States. For many years after 1918, only one pastor of the church, Gynther Storaasli, would remain on active duty as a military chaplain. Not until the days of the depression era, in 1935, would another man, Christian O. Anderson, join Storaasli on active duty. Anderson left the service in 1938; in 1939 Albin Fortney came on active duty.

The period 1919 - 1939 was obviously a time of transition between the 'Great War' which had ended in 1918 and World War II which began in Europe in 1939, although the United States did not become officially involved until 1941.

But the period was a time of transition also for the NLCA. Regular Army Chaplain Londahl left the service in 1922; Chaplain Storaasli, a veteran of World War I, came on active duty again in 1920, and would serve as a chaplain in the Army until 1948, the longest period of such service for any man in the NLCA. Most of his service as a chaplain was, therefore, given in just this period. But several other men were also involved in significant ways during this time. A number of veterans from World War I became active in the Reserves. Most notable of these men were



Stearns and Fjelstad. Fjelstad was to return to active duty in 1941 and die shortly thereafter.

Also during this period between the wars, especially during the latter part of it, a number of pastors joined the Reserves. A few of these men had served as enlisted men or line officers during the War, and some of them were to see active duty in World War II. While in 1922, with the disestablishment of the NLCSSW, the NLCA may well have thought that it would no longer have to be interested in an official way in the affairs of the armed services, particularly insofar as they concerned its chaplains, by the mid-thirties it was apparent that this was no longer so. As the end of the period approached, it was becoming more and more apparent that once again the church would have to become involved in a significant way.

In the midst of World War I, a significant step towards greater unity among many of the Lutheran churches in America was taken. The great success of the NLCSSW prompted in large measure the movements which eventuated in the formation of the National Lutheran Council in Chicago, September 6, 1918.<sup>1</sup>

It was through the National Lutheran Council (NLC) that the NLCA/ELC was to work in recruiting and maintaining contact with its chaplains. Even after the ELC established its own Military Chaplaincy Commission during the Korean War, it continued to work through the NLC in its dealings with the armed services of the United States.

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<sup>1</sup>Wentz, p. 17.



NLCA President H. G. Stub, whose son was working with the NLCSSW, was elected head of the new NLC.<sup>1</sup> The other key NLCA man at the NLCSSW, Lauritz Larsen, ". . . stood at the center of all National Lutheran Council activities from their beginning until his tragic death at the age of forty in January, 1923."<sup>2</sup> Because of the excellent work he did for the NLCSSW as their representative in Washington, D.C., he was given the same job by the NLC. And in December, 1920, while still continuing in his duties as an executive of the NLCSSW, he was elected president of the NLC.<sup>3</sup> He was a very remarkable man, and, as an historian of the NLC has noted, "Had a lesser man held Larsen's post the Council could have foundered."<sup>4</sup>

#### Changes in the Status of Chaplains

At the third annual meeting of the NLCSSW in December, 1919 its Executive Secretary reported:

At present the status of the chaplains in the United States Army is somewhat unsettled. The army regulations make the following provision: "The duties required by law of chaplains are that they shall hold appropriate religious services for the benefit of commands to which assigned; that they shall perform appropriate burial services at the burial of officers and soldiers who may die in such commands; and that they shall give instruction to the enlisted men in the common English branches of education (Secs. 1124, 1125, R.S.)"<sup>5</sup>

Larsen added: "As a matter of fact, the chaplain has often been used in the past for a great many other duties."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>5</sup>Lauritz Larsen, Report of the Executive Secretary, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.



And Larsen went on to explain to the NLCSSW that the Army itself had made some changes or was proposing to do so. This of course is a standard ploy when some agency of the government begins to feel itself under some pressure to make changes in its method of operations.

It is further planned (by the Army) that the chaplain is not to be encumbered with a great deal of recreational work and that he is not available for assignment as "educational or recreational officer," who is charged with the direct control and supervision of all such activities. It is also provided that the commanding officer shall give support and assistance to chaplains and other agencies in the problem of moral training, character building and religious guidance of the soldier. It is my understanding, and this has been confirmed by officers from the War Plans Division, that the chaplain shall and will control the religious work in his regiment, and that other agencies shall be employed under his direction.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps the last statement was made in reference to the troubles that the chaplains had experienced with the Y.M.C.A. during the war and was seen as a corrective of that problem.

Perhaps the Army did reduce the requirements it had laid on the chaplains to be recreational directors, but it certainly did not eliminate them all, at least not if the experience of Storaasli were at all typical:

One of the happiest memories of my Army career is of the years I spent as shortstop of the Fort Mills baseball team in the Philippines. I recall a vital series against another Army team in Manila - one game Saturday afternoon, another one Sunday afternoon. Sunday morning I had to conduct an Easter service at my station on Corregidor (This was in the twenties). My commanding general was as ardent a fan as I was, and he directed me to be available for both games. But he recognized my obligation - and his - to the military personnel and their families who desired to worship in their own post chapel on Easter morning. Accordingly,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



he arranged for me to return to Corregidor by chartered launch after the Saturday afternoon game. Sunday morning after service I went from the chapel to the airfield and flew back to Manila. I like to feel that I was fulfilling my ministry to the troops when I played in the game that afternoon as much as when I stood before my altar and in my pulpit that morning.<sup>1</sup>

Although Storaasli may have been satisfied with that arrangement, it was evident that others were not. And it is certain that the Army's proposed actions did not lessen the efforts that the General Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains, Federal Council of Churches, had prepared a bill for submission to congress that was intended to clarify and improve the status of chaplains. Larsen gave some of the main points of the bill to the meeting of the NLCSSW:

I. Organization. There shall be created a corps in the army of the United States to be known as the Corps of Chaplains. Said Corps shall be administered by a staff of three chaplains fairly representing the religious forces of the country.

II. The chaplains of said corps shall have rank, pay and allowance as follows:

Five per cent, with the rank, pay and allowance of colonel.

Ten per cent, with the rank, pay and allowance of lieutenant colonel.

Fifteen per cent, with the rank, pay and allowance of major.

Forty-five per cent, with the rank, pay and allowance of captain.

Twenty-five per cent, with the rank, pay and allowance of first lieutenant.

III. The number of chaplains (including those now holding permanent commission) in the said corps shall be in the proportion of one for each 1200 commissioned officers and enlisted men authorized by law for the permanent Military Establishment.

IV. Appointment. No person shall be commissioned as a chaplain who is over 35 years of age and all commissions

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<sup>1</sup>Storaasli, "Spiritual Contribution."



shall be provisional for the term of two years, except that any clergyman who shall have served during the period of the recent emergency as a chaplain of the Army of the United States, shall be eligible for permanent appointment on his Army record, without regard to the requirement of provisional service and examination respecting mental qualification.<sup>1</sup>

This was a far-reaching proposal. The essential features of it (the percentage of chaplains in each rank and the determination of the number of chaplains by setting a ratio in comparison with the total authorized strength, the establishment of a Corps of Chaplains, and the setting forth of appointment qualification) remain, with minor modifications from time to time, in force to the present day. As a member of the General Chaplaincy Committee, Larsen doubtlessly had much to do with the drafting of the proposed bill. Obviously the bill was intended to settle once and for all the matter of chaplain's insignia by making chaplains full-fledged members of the Army, with pay, rank and allowances equal to that of other staff officers and by granting the chaplains equal status by establishing their own corps and staff to administer it.

The bill, with some changes, did become law, but not without some serious opposition in the House of Representatives. Proposals made there would have given one chaplain for every 2,200 men and officers and, instead of enjoying definite rank from first lieutenant to lieutenant Colonel, the chaplains ". . . would have been left without definite rank, merely nominal rank from first

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<sup>1</sup>Larsen, "Report," December, 1919.



lieutenant to lieutenant colonel and no hope left for organization of a corps of chaplains."<sup>1</sup>

Two major changes were made in the proposed bill. The first change was certainly a good one.

One chaplain, of rank not below that of major, may be appointed by the President, by and with the advise and consent of the Senate, to be chief of chaplains. He shall serve as such for four years, and shall have the rank, pay and allowances of a colonel while so serving. His duties shall include investigation into qualifications of candidates for appointment as chaplain, and general coordination and supervision of the work of chaplains.<sup>2</sup>

It was clearly better to have one man, rather than a committee of three, to be at the head of the corps. Committees may be the rule of civilian life, but they are certaintly not so in the military.

The other change may not have been such a good idea. The new law read that "Appointments as chaplains shall be made from among persons duly accredited by some religious denomination or organization, and of good standing therein, between the ages of 23 and 45 years."<sup>3</sup> The problem lay in the raising of the age limit from 35 years to 45 years. Although the upper age limit has varied over the years, only in the days of greatest need for chaplains during World War II and Korea has the limit been set as high as 45; usually the preference has been for 35, the age proposed by the committee.

Writing from the perspective of a chaplain, Storaasli later commented about the establishment of the office of the

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<sup>1</sup>Lauritz Larson, "Final Result of Chaplain Legislation," undated report, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Chief of Army Chaplain, a post he himself once filled:

Experiences of the top military leaders with chaplains in the first World War convinced them that if the services of the chaplains were to be fully utilized, closer supervision over them and their activities must be attained in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness. Thus the National Defense Act of 1920 made provision for the establishment of the Chief of Army Chaplains, was a most significant recognition of the Army chaplains, although a tardy one, similar to the recognition which had been given the Navy Chaplaincy in 1917. Theoretically and officially at least, this recognition gave the Army Chaplaincy an equal standing among the various arms and services of our military establishments; something it never before had enjoyed and henceforth both chaplaincies were to be regarded as integral parts of our Army and Navy. As an aftermath of this official recognition there was set in motion a chain of favorable reactions toward the chaplaincy which permeated the thinking of the rank and file of our military personnel all the way down the line from the top military leaders to the lowest ranking private or seamen.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently when Storaasli wrote, he was unaware of the efforts that had been made by Larsen, the NLCSSW and the General Commission. Nevertheless his comments lend support to the proposition that what Larsen did had far-reaching and beneficial results in the lives of military chaplains, and thus in the work that the churches were enabled to do in the armed forces.

Storaasli

Storaasli, who had been a NLCA chaplain during World War I, but had been discharged in July, 1919, wrote Larsen upon his return to active duty in 1920. In that letter he indicated a way in which he thought the Call to the chaplaincy was given:

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<sup>1</sup>Storaasli, "Spiritual Contribution."



I have accepted appointment as Chaplain and First Lieutenant, U.S.A. When the appointment came through last September - I had then been so recently installed that I felt it impossible to accept -- unless I would be given 6 months to straighten things out - both personal and congregational. My request was at that time denied, so I considered the matter closed.

Last Tuesday a week ago, I received a wire from the War Department saying that another opportunity was given me to accept, so I, looking upon it as a Divine Call, accepted the appointment.<sup>1</sup>

Storaasli knew what equipment and funds had been supplied to the chaplains by the NLCSSW during World War I and wondered: "In other words - are you assisting the Chaplains in peace times as when the War was on? If so then I know what I may ask for and what not."<sup>2</sup> Storaasli was told:

The Commission is still caring for its chaplains. The whole matter of equipment is being considered by the General Chaplaincy Committee of the Federal Council of Churches. So far as we know there has been no definite decision reached. In the mean time, the Commission stands ready to do for you now just what it did for you during the war. You will know, of course, what that means.<sup>3</sup>

And in the same letter some possible changes were hinted at:

There is a slight possibility that the Commission may be disbanded at Chicago tomorrow night but from the conference held here between its officers, I am doubtful if this will occur. Even if it should, the Council will continue the policy of the Commission. It seems likely, however, that the Commission will continue as an organization for some time yet.<sup>4</sup>

However disquieting that news may have been to Storaasli and his wife - they were expecting the birth of a child at the time - he

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<sup>1</sup>Storaasli to Larsen, 5 December 1920, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Freas to Storaasli, 6 December 1920, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



entered the service, where he was to remain on active duty until 1948.

Gynther Storaasli was born in 1885 and ordained in 1914. He was a graduate of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota. Prior to World War I he had served as a missionary to China, as a campus pastor in San Francisco, and as a parish pastor in Warren and Lyle, Minnesota. Before reentering active duty as a chaplain in 1921, he served for a short while a parish in Northwood, Iowa.<sup>1</sup> He was to become, before his death, the "grand old man" of the NLCA/EIC chaplains.

When Storaasli came on active duty in 1921 the NLCSSW was supporting ". . . about ten regular chaplains in the Army and Navy by allowing them certain equipment and expense funds."<sup>2</sup>

Storaasli was glad to be back in the service again, although he said that it had taken on a different aspect.<sup>3</sup> He was glad for the help of the NLCSSW:

I appreciate what the Commission is doing. The complaint among most of the Reformed Chaplains is that their churches are doing nothing for them anymore. And it is a source of pride to be able to tell them that my church commission is still on the job.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Office of Public Relations, The American Lutheran Church, "Retired Chaplain Storaasli Dies; Served in National Church Posts," August 16, 1971, Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism, Gynther Storaasli, Biographical File, New York.

<sup>2</sup>Letter to C. M. Jacobs, 11 January 1921, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Storaasli to Freas, 19 March 1921, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



He quickly found use for the money which the NLCSSW supplied him. Evidently the NLCSSW didn't supply him with a motorcycle, which NLCA chaplains had received during the war, so Storaasli bought a used car.<sup>1</sup> And he overdrew the Fund that the NLCSSW had supplied him when he purchased some furnishings for his office in the Service Club.<sup>2</sup> But he remembered the ways of the service and was in various ways trying to obtain a mimeo from the Army so that the NLCSSW would not have to buy it for him.<sup>3</sup>

Although it was peace-time, he found plenty to do. In a monthly report to the Chief of Chaplains made just two months after reporting for duty, he spoke of visiting an average of sixty-one hospital patients, speaking with thirty-five prisoners, holding services at the Stockade and at the Service Club, and of arranging for the holding of Catholic services, helping four men to become naturalized, attending and assisting at Enlisted Men's dances, officiating at a marriage, and playing as a member of a regimental baseball team.<sup>4</sup>

The other NLCA chaplain at the time was M. M. Londahl. In 1922 he had served in the Army continuously as a chaplain for twelve years. Some of those years had been difficult ones. For many of them he had to pay the cost of moving his dependents

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Storaasli to Freas, 15 April 1921, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Chaplain Gynther Storaasli, 31st Brigade, C.A.C., Monthly Statement to the Chief of Chaplains, May 2, 1921. NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



himself, although that was no longer true in 1922. And, he wrote Larsen, "I have used several thousand dollars of my wife's means to carry on in the work, while in the lower grade and during the war."<sup>1</sup> He was hoping that Larsen could help him stay on active duty. What efforts, if any, Larsen made on his behalf is not known, but he was discharged from the service that same year.

The NLCSSW as an entity passed out of existence in 1923. Few Lutheran chaplains remained on duty, only one of them a NLCA pastor. Nevertheless, in its short span of life, it had accomplished some tremendous things. It was one of the chief catalysts for the movement toward Lutheran cooperation that eventuated in the formation of the National Lutheran Council. And in the NLCSSW, principally through its secretary, NLCA pastor Lauritz Larsen, the same church had done some effective work for its chaplains and on their behalf in dealing with the armed services of the United States. Although it was to be many years before the church would again be so heavily and directly involved with the military, through the efforts of Larsen an important precedent had been set.

With the demise of the NLCSSW how Storaasli related to the NLCA is not known. Until the thirties no mention is made of him in the church records. Then the only information concerning him is given in occasional notices about his whereabouts in the church paper, The Lutheran Herald. In this whole era between the

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<sup>1</sup>Londahl to Larsen, July, 1922, NLCSSW - Archives of CL.



wars his name never appears on the clergy roster of the church that was published each year. He was truly a forgotten man.

Perhaps some of the reason for that lay in the general tenor of the times. Eugene Klug, writing his observations about the period, says:

The period between the two world wars was not without difficulties for the military chaplaincy. The drastic demobilization of the Armed Forces brought about by the Kellog-Briand Pact, the movement toward pacifism in some American churches, the criticism of incumbent chaplains for their lack of spirituality - these were factors that combined to all but undo the military chaplaincy.<sup>1</sup>

So far as is known, Storaasli was never accused of a lack of spirituality, but he suffered the fate of anonymity nevertheless.

Americans wanted to forget the troubles engendered by the war, and for a time they succeeded. But at the end of the twenties a new crisis, the economic depression, arose.

#### Depression Era Engenders New Interest in the Chaplaincy

Certainly Lutherans, at least judging by their response, were bewildered by the events that followed the "Black Friday" of the crash in 1929. Summing up his impressions of the twenties and thirties, and of how those events affected the NLC, Wentz, a church historian of the era, writes:

For the National Lutheran Council the fourteen years between 1925 and outbreak of World War II (1939) were a

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene F. Klug, "The Chaplaincy in American Public Life," in Church, State and Chaplaincy, ed: A. Ray Applequist (Washington: General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel, 1969), pp. 80-81.



time of severe testing. . . .

In the 1920's Americans were disillusioned by the failure of World War I as a crusade and were rather complacent about mankind's ills. Church people were not readily inclined for new ventures in church work. In the 1930's the depression had a stunning impact causing the American people and their churches to retrench both financially and in their vision of new tasks. Isolationism was predominant during both decades. When the New Deal proposed emergency social legislation, Lutherans were timid and slow in coming to any consensus within their church circles.<sup>1</sup>

A remembrance of the past war was given in the Lutheran Herald in May, 1932, when it reported that "The Rev. Dr. Gustav Stearns was elected president of the Chaplains' Association of the Army of the United States at the National Convention held in New York City, April 6-7."<sup>2</sup> Stearns, veteran of the war, always maintained his interest in the chaplaincy. But one suspects that his interest was more the recollections of an "old soldier" rather than real interest in the contemporary chaplaincy. Later in the decade several articles appeared in the Lutheran Herald regarding the chaplaincy, but Stearns wrote none of them.

In the mid-thirties a number of NLCA pastors began applying for commissions as chaplains in the Reserve Forces. At this time men with such interests were evidently directed to the General Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains. In 1935 NLCA Pastor Norris R. Halvorson wrote to Dr. Roy B. Guild, then Executive Secretary of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, asking for information about how to apply for an appointment as a

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<sup>1</sup>Wentz, pp. 63-64.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald, 10 May 1932.



Reserve Chaplain in the United States Army.<sup>1</sup> He, like all other such applicants, was told that:

When all necessary material (application form, result of physical examination, etc.) has been obtained by this office, the application will be referred to the Chaplains' committee representing your denomination and upon their report will be based the action of this General Committee.<sup>2</sup>

If the Committee decided in his favor, a certificate of recommendation for appointment would be transmitted to the appropriate Army Area Office, and he would be granted his commission by them.<sup>3</sup>

Applicants then had to go through a three-step procedure: first they had to make their desire known to the General Committee, then they had to be approved by their denominational body, and finally that body's action had to be approved by the General Committee. All this was necessary, because as the Committee said:

"(It) . . . cooperates with the War and Navy Departments in the selection of Protestant Chaplains.

Under regulations of the Departments, no candidate for a chaplaincy is considered who has not received the endorsement of "some religious denomination or organization." The General Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains is recognized by the Departments as the agency through which they may secure the evidence of fitness and approval of candidates from some 24 Protestant bodies.

This Committee, upon receipt of the information requested of candidates for chaplaincy appointments, carefully investigates each case, then refers all data to a representative or committee of the denomination to which the applicant belongs, and, based upon the report of that committee, issues a certificate of approval of disapproval as appears to be justified by the facts.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Halvorson to Guild, 11 December 1935, Norris R. Halvorson file, DSMP - LUCUSA.

<sup>2</sup> Guild to Halvorson, 26 December 1935, Norris R. Halvorson file, DSMP - LUCUSA.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.      <sup>4</sup> Ibid., enclosure.



Apparently this cumbersome procedure had to be followed by NLCA/ELC pastors desiring to be chaplains until 1939, when ". . . the National Lutheran Council began direct negotiations with the chief of chaplains."<sup>1</sup>

The crucial matter at stake here is the granting of ecclesiastical endorsement. It appears from what evidence is available that at this time, the thirties and on into the forties, the military required prior endorsement by some religious body before accepting the application of anyone desiring to be a chaplain. What is curious is that the final and therefore most crucial endorsement should be given by a committee of the Federal Council of Churches. The fact that in later years this procedure was changed indicates that finally some began to feel some disquietude about this process.

Dr. J. A. Aasgaard became president of the NLCA in 1925. At some time, perhaps in the early thirties, he revised that church's procedures for handling the applications of men desiring to enter the chaplaincy. In 1934 NLCA pastor Hjalmar F. Hanson began making application to enter the Naval Reserve Chaplaincy. In 1940 Hanson became the first NLCA man to enter active duty as a Navy chaplain. When Guild received Hanson's papers in 1934, he sent them on to Rev. Ralph H. Long, then Executive Director of the National Lutheran Council, with the explanation:

Previously, applications of members of the Norwegian Lutheran Church have been sent to Dr. Aasgaard for denominational action, but as that Church is included in

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<sup>1</sup>E. Clifford Nelson, ed., The Lutherans in North America (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 475.



the National Lutheran Council, we assume we are correct in submitting such applications to you for decision.<sup>1</sup>

The men whom Halvorson listed as references included Carl L. Foss and N. M. Ylvisaker. Foss had served as a NLCA chaplain in the war and during World War II would again see active duty. In the mid-thirties, however, he was in a slightly different field of work. As part of the "New Deal," the Roosevelt administration had established the Civilian Conservation Corps. The intent of this Corps was to provide wholesome work for men. Although the Army was involved in the administration of the work, the participants remained civilians. Camps were set up, and chaplains were hired to work in them. Sometimes, like Foss, those chaplains had been in the military. And again like Foss, some of the CCC chaplains had become members of the Reserve Army Chaplain Corps. That is why Foss signed his letter of recommendation "1st Lt. Ch-Res. District Chaplain" on stationery that bore the letter-head "Headquarters, Fort Missoula District, Civilian Conservation Corps, Office of the District Chaplain."<sup>2</sup> Although Ylvisaker had not served on active duty as a military chaplain, like Foss he was also a member of the Reserve Army Chaplain Corps. In the mid-thirties he was executive secretary of The Young People's Luther League of the NLCA. He used both positions to publicize and advocate the cause of the military chaplaincy. In the years leading up to and including World War II he became the NLCA's chief

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<sup>1</sup>Guild to Long, 26 October 1934, Hjalmar F. Hanson file,  
DSMP - LUCUSA

<sup>2</sup>Foss to Guild, 5 March 1936, Norris R. Halvorson file,  
DSMP - LUCUSA.



advocate for and in behalf of the chaplains.

Thus, probably due to the influence of Ylvisaker, the church, by means of the Lutheran Herald was kept informed of every change of address and promotion of Chaplain Storaasli in the thirties. For example, in 1934 the church was informed that "Chaplain Gynther Storaasli, Fort Kamchameha, Hawaii, has been promoted to the rank of major in the Army of the United States."<sup>1</sup>

The Lutheran Herald's pages were used extensively by Ylvisaker in his promotional activities. In a special issue in 1935, entitled the "November Luther League Issue," there were carried two items pertaining to chaplains. One was an article, "In Defense of Chaplains," written by the Army Chief of Chaplains, Col. Alva J. Brastad. The other was an announcement that the Young People's Luther League of the NLCA had appropriated \$1000 for the year 1936 in order to provide religious supplies for CCC camps.<sup>2</sup> In 1936 Reserve Army NLCA Chaplain Eggen reported on the Chaplains' Association of the Army of the United States' meeting at which Ylvisaker had spoken. He was later to become and remain for years the president of this group. At that meeting, in speaking on the topic, "Maintaining Interest in the Chaplains' Reserve, Ylvisaker had pointed out the need of real pastoral work among the men both in the Army and in the CCC camps.<sup>3</sup> In June, 1937, the church paper's front page carried a picture of some of the NLCA's

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<sup>1</sup>Lutheran Herald 18 (23 January 1934):74.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 19 (5 November 1935):1081-1082.

<sup>3</sup>J. Muller Eggen, "The National Convention of Army Chaplains," Lutheran Herald 20 (12 May 1936):483.



Reserve Army chaplains.<sup>1</sup> By this time some church bodies had become rather severly critical of the chaplaincy. Responding to this the editor wrote:

Recently some church bodies have taken an indifferent attitude toward their respective chaplains in the service because of the undue influence of small groups of radical pacifists. The Lutheran Church, however, has never been in the habit of swinging the pendulum from one extreme to the other. Like a mighty stabilizing and forward-moving power, she will join the Christian movement for peace among all nations. But she will not turn radical and refuse to support and pray for her pastors who are ministering to our young men in the CCC and the Army.<sup>2</sup>

In the late 1930's the National Lutheran Council made unsuccessful efforts to secure provision for a Lutheran ministry to the students of West Point (the Army's school for officers). That is, the Lutherans wanted a specific ministry that would be distinct from a general Protestant ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Attempting to answer criticism, Reserve Army Chaplain James Peterson wrote in the Lutheran Herald in late 1939:

The chaplain is not first of all a morale officer; he is a minister of the Gospel to serve the men who have been moved away from home and church.<sup>4</sup>

His argument has been frequently echoed by defenders of the chaplaincy before and since he wrote. He went on to say". . . We would also encourage certain of their choicest young pastors to make timely preparation and application for a chaplain's commission so that our church does not lose out relative to a great duty.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lutheran Herald 21 (8 June 1937):565

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 575.

<sup>3</sup> Wentz, p. 71.

<sup>4</sup> James C. Peterson, "Is An Army Chaplain Permitted to Preach The Gospel?" Lutheran Herald 23 (21 November 1939):1110.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.



What had happened by this time was that on 1 September Hitler's Nazi Germany had invaded Poland. England had promised to defend Poland. Thus Canada, a member of the British Commonwealth, was involved in war. A series of events began that culminated in the United States entering fully into the armed conflict of World War II by 1941.

Thus by late 1939 the NLCA was a divided church. Its members who lived in Canada were in a nation at war; its members in the United States were still at peace. But the shadows of what was to come were becoming more distinct all the time for those who were willing to look.

As 1939 drew to a close, only two NLCA chaplains, Storaasli and Albin L. Fortney, were on active duty. But the following year was to see a dramatic change.

During the thirties, however, due in large measure to the efforts of Ylvisaker, many men had joined the Reserves. And from the ranks of these men would come many who would serve on active duty in World War II.<sup>1</sup>

During the twenties and thirties the NLCA had to some degree reflected the tenor of the times. In common with most of the country, the needs of the military chaplaincy were forgotten and ignored for many years following the end of World War I, the "Crusade to Save Democracy." But the NLCA did not completely abandon or deny the need for the chaplaincy. With, to be sure, the stimulus of the Depression and efforts of the government to

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<sup>1</sup>Report to the President, p. 8.



deal with it, and with the increasingly ominous turn in world affairs, the NLCA began to consider participating more actively in the chaplaincy. For many years Storaasli had carried on alone and unrecognized. But with the impetus of Ylvisaker, matters had begun to change by the end of the era.



## CHAPTER THREE

### GLOBAL WAR, WORLD WAR II (1940-1945)

The years 1940-1945 were in some respects almost a replay of the years of the First World War. In these years too the church responded with enthusiasm when once the need became obvious. Just before the war began for the United States in 1917 one Norwegian-Lutheran chaplain was on active duty; the next year there were eight men in the Army serving as chaplains. In 1939 two NLCA pastors were active duty chaplains, by the end of 1940 eight men had donned uniforms. Out of the desperate need of 1917 the NLCSSW had been formed; in 1940 a like Commission was formed. At first it was proposed to use virtually the same name,<sup>1</sup> but in the end the simple title, Service Commission (SC) was chosen. During the "Great War" especially one NLCA pastor, Lauritz Larsen, had done a tremendously effective job in relating the interacting concerns of the NLCA and the military as he worked in a key position for what had become the NLC. In World War II another NLCA pastor, N. M. Ylvisaker, played a similar role.

But there were differences between the two eras as well. Unlike World War I, in the Second World War the church's involvement became, if anything, more intense. Certainly it was more prolonged. At the end of hostilities in 1945, 103 chaplains

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<sup>1</sup>Wentz, p. 100.



of the NLCA were on active duty. Prior to that, two of them had died. One of them was the only NLCA/ELC chaplain to die as the result of wounds inflicted by enemy action. In the First World War chaplains went to areas where the Christian church had long been established. But in the Second World War chaplains found themselves encountering natives who had known of the Christian faith for only a generation or two, and would deal with enemies who were avowed enemies of the Christian faith. And in the Second World War the NLCA for the first time had men serving as chaplains in the Navy and in the Canadian Armed Forces.

#### Pre-War Preparations

The change from peace to war came suddenly and dramatically. A few members of the NLCA, those living in Canada, had become involved in the war in 1939, although the first NLCA pastor did not join the Canadian forces until 1942. But for most members of the NLCA, the change came in April, 1940, when the Nazis suddenly and without warning invaded Norway. The president of the NLCA, J. A. Aasgaard, wrote in the Lutheran Herald shortly after the event:

A great calamity has fallen on the land of our fathers. Today an enemy is in the country. . . . This is a call to the people of our church, who through their fathers received the Word of God and the heritage of Christianity from the land of the midnight sun. As American people who have shown sympathy and understanding with the oppressed during this last year . . . ."1

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<sup>1</sup>J. A. Aasgaard, "To Our Pastors and Congregations," Lutheran Herald 25 (23 April 1940):433.



Conscription went into effect in the United States in 1940. Thousands of young men were drafted into the armed forces and war preparations, although stoutly resisted by many, began in earnest.

The Depression had not ended, but the stimulus of spending for armaments would soon erase its effects. New industries began to spring up, and old ones were revitalized. Aware of all these things, Ylvisaker wrote in 1941:

It should be apparent to all of us, however, that even religiously we are facing the greatest dislocation in American history. By the time of the Selective Service Act millions of our young men will in the five year period prescribed be transferred from home communities (to) where they will experience an entirely new existence under government control, even religiously. Large numbers will be in CCC camps, also under government control. And still other millions will be transferring from one government job to another in the desperate struggle for daily living.<sup>1</sup>

In 1940 the Lutheran Herald published an article raising the question, "What can the members of our various churches do to encourage the work of our Army and Navy Chaplains?"<sup>2</sup> In answering, Ylvisaker said, "May we not expect that our Christian nation will in this crisis support with their prayers and their sacrificial service that these men may receive the ministrations to which our common faith in an ever-living God entitles them?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Service Men's Division, National Lutheran Council, The Lutheran Church and Her Emergency Ministry to Her Service Men (Minneapolis: Service Men's Division, National Lutheran Council, 1941), p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>N. M. Ylvisaker, "What can the members of our various churches and the people of this country do to encourage the work of our Army and Navy Chaplains," Lutheran Herald 24 (2 July 1940): 700.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



The NLCA during World War II answered "yes" to Ylvisaker's question.

There was also a tremendous response on the part of the military establishment as described by Storaasli in the following words:

Thousands of mobilization type chapels sprang up throughout the length and breadth of our land and on our overseas military establishments. There was hardly a military camp, base, or naval station of any size which could not boast one or more well built, well equipped and well appointed houses of God. Some of our larger training centers had as many as 20-25 houses of worship.<sup>1</sup>

Having been in a number of such chapels, the writer can attest that some of those structures are very fine indeed.

But the military leadership recognized that no matter what it did for service people on the military bases, what happened and what was available off base was often a very different matter. Ylvisaker wrote that:

The Morale Divisions of the Army and Navy claimed that they could control the situations within the camps and stations, that they were providing recreation and wholesome activities for the men within camp and at the same time were keeping vice and liquor under control in military areas. Outside the camp, however, their power of control was limited. The Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, Gen. George C. Marshall, asked that the churches and welfare agencies co-operate to develop wholesome places for the soldier and sailor when on leave. Chaplains and regimental officers joined in this plea. The representatives of the National Lutheran Council heard this plea, and they saw the need.<sup>2</sup>

And in fact one of the major accomplishments of the SC under Ylvisaker's leadership was the establishing of a number of

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<sup>1</sup>Storaasli, "Spiritual Contribution," pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Service Men's Division, National Lutheran Council, p.



Lutheran Service Centers around the country.

But against the backdrop of Ylvisaker's proud remembrance of what the SC had accomplished and Storaasli's fulsome praise of what the military did, it must be recalled that prior to Pearl Harbor, anything associated with the military was suspect, if not hated, by many Americans. Certainly in the case of the military, one today suspects that much of what went on was calculated work in public relations, an effort to win the support of a reluctant and suspicious public.

Beginning late in 1940 N. M. Ylvisaker and C. E. Krumbholz, at the direction of the National Lutheran Council, made a survey trip of forty-two military camps and of the forty-eight communities adjacent to them.

They made their report to the annual meeting of the NLC in 1941. On the basis of that report the NLC voted to begin at once a comprehensive program. Ylvisaker was named as director.<sup>1</sup> The NLCA, under the direction of Aasgaard, appropriated \$100,000 for immediate use by the council. Interestingly enough, these funds were the balance carried over from the NLCSSW's appeal in World War I.<sup>2</sup>

Earlier, at Winnipeg on April 2, 1940, the Canadian Lutheran Commission, under the direction of the Ralph Long of the NLC, had been organized. This Commission undertook the work of supervising the war-time service of the dominion churches.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson, p. 476.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>E. Clifford Nelson, Lutheranism in North America, 1914-1970, with a Foreword by Kent Knutson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), p. 127.



The position of the chaplain in the Canadian armed forces was somewhat different from that in the United States. As the first Canadian NLCA chaplain, I. J. Saugen was later to report:

". . . although the chaplains' corps is a branch of the Canadian Army, it is governed by the churches rather than by military leaders. . . .

Unlike the American chaplains, Canadian chaplains do not move with their units. Military units may come and go within a given military district, but the chaplains remain within their district unless they are posted for overseas duty.<sup>1</sup>

In this report of his survey of camps and camp sites for the NLC, Ylvisaker had spoken of the support that would be given chaplains by the government of the United States:

Chaplains have been recognized as never before in our national life. Their work is being encouraged as never before. They will have complete charge of the religious life in camps, ports, forts and stations. They are to be given every facility to carry on.<sup>2</sup>

Giving some further explanation of the chapel construction to which Storaasli had referred, Ylvisaker reported that "There is a present bill before Congress, unanimously endorsed by the War Department and the Chief of Staff's office, for an appropriation of \$12,200,000.00 to have completely equipped chapels built at once in every military center."<sup>3</sup> That construction program, as Storaasli later recalled, was carried out.

Ylvisaker, in his report, went on to say that "Chaplains will be given all possible assistance, and they are expected to be men of God, fully conscious of a high calling and a noble duty,

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<sup>1</sup>I. J. Saugen, "They Serve On Two Fronts," Lutheran Herald 26 (15 December 1942):1341.

<sup>2</sup>N. M. Ylvisaker, "Report of survey of camp and camp cities for the National Lutheran Council," Luther Theological Seminary Library, Saint Paul, Minnesota, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



as men of God to bring men of our country back to God, and eager to serve Him and their country in selfless sacrifice and devotion."<sup>1</sup> Because of his position as Director of the SC and President of the Chaplains' Association of the Army and Navy of the United States, even though by then he had attained the rank of Major in the Reserve Chaplain Corps of the Army, Ylvisaker was not called to active duty.

Storaasli later reported what further efforts the military made to support the work of the churches through their chaplains in World War II:

But our Defense Department did not call it a day after building thousands of chapels dedicated to the glory of God and to the spiritual enrichment of its fighting forces, and staffing them with qualified servants of God. It determined to leave no stone unturned to attain the high quality of morale it felt was needed to win the war. The third and final step taken to increase the spiritual strength of the soldier was to make available to every serviceman and woman a pocket size volume of God's Holy Word. Congress was petitioned and granted funds for the printing and distribution of the New Testament to the Protestants, the Douay version to the Roman Catholics and selected Old Testament books for those of the Jewish faith. Our government printing presses went into high gear and printed millions of copies of God's Word, and shipped them to distribution points all over the world wherever our military personnel were stationed.<sup>2</sup>

Ylvisaker went on to urge in his report that:

A vital contact should be maintained between the Church and her chaplains, by regular correspondence and personal conferences. Synodical backing should be given officially to members who are in the chaplaincy service, so that these servants of the Church may be assured of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Storaasli, "Spiritual Contribution," p. 41.



the sympathetic co-operation of the Church in their spiritual ministrations to the men in the service of their country.<sup>1</sup>

And in repetition of what had been done by the NLCSSW in World War I, Ylvisaker suggested that:

Religious literature appropriate to the needs of the men in service should be supplied to the chaplains for free distribution. This literature should include quantities of the Service Prayer Book, the Army and Navy Service Book, Bible Portions and Testaments, and tracts. Stationery should also be supplied for the use of the men. A modest sum of money for emergency needs should be supplied, monthly or quarterly to the Lutheran chaplains.<sup>2</sup>

Most of what Ylvisaker suggested was later done by the SC.

And finally in his report Ylvisaker recommended "That all pastors and congregations be urged to establish and maintain regular communication with all men of the Church who are known to have been enlisted in our National Emergency Service Program."<sup>3</sup>

At least some congregations of the NLCA did follow up on that last recommendation. O. G. Malmin, editor of the Lutheran Herald after 1940, recalled what had been the case during the war in the congregation he attended:

In the congregation to which we belong there certainly was not much possibility that any of the men would feel neglected or forgotten. The most active committee in the congregation was the "Servicemen's Committee of the Brotherhood." The personal letters which went from the pastor and from fellow members to the men were beyond numbering. Not a Sunday went by without public prayer for the nation and men: always we sang an appropriate hymn. At intervals, the men were mentioned by name in a special period of prayer at the morning worship, and a candle was lighted for each of them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ylvisaker, "Report", p. 1.   <sup>2</sup>Ibid.   <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup>O. G. Malmin, "Plain Words From a Chaplain," Lutheran Herald 37 (20 January 1953):58-59.



As Director of the SC, Ylvisaker began publishing a monthly "News Letter" which, as he explained in its first edition, would ". . . be made a regular means of communication between the Service Men's Commission of the National Lutheran Council and our Lutheran Chaplains."<sup>1</sup> He expressed the hope that the chaplains would cooperate by writing regularly to the Commission.

Many of the NLCA chaplains did so and some of their correspondence shall be quoted in the succeeding pages.

Chaplains found themselves very busy. Chaplain Boe wrote that at the Easter service he conducted in 1941 over 15,000 people had been in attendance.<sup>2</sup>

And in the days just prior to and following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, many men joined the chaplaincy. In the summer of 1941, Ylvisaker reported that the NLCA had nineteen chaplains on active duty, with others about to report.<sup>3</sup>

The totals were to rise quickly. Fifty-one men were in the chaplaincy in 1942, seventy-four in 1943, ninety-two in 1944, and an all-time high of 103 saw active service in 1945. But recruitment became more difficult as the war wore on and the difficulties facing the Allies became more apparent.

However, in January 1942, a year after his first report to the NLC, Ylvisaker could say that in the intervening months

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<sup>1</sup>News Letter 1 (2 April 1941).

<sup>2</sup>News Letter 1 (2 June 1941).

<sup>3</sup>News Letter 1 (2 July 1941).



the number of active Lutheran chaplains had nearly tripled to a total of 125 affiliated with the NLC.<sup>1</sup>

This naturally created problems with pastoral supply for the parishes. Frequently retired men were called to "fill in" for the "duration." Sometimes parish officials made attempts to have men planning to become pastors exempted from the service. But unless such men were already at Luther Theological Seminary, such appeals were in vain.

#### Experiences of Chaplains

Chaplains on active duty were quick to defend the validity of their duties.

The chaplain does not become a nondescript purveyor of religion. He remains the representative of his church. While he is interested in the welfare of the men, spiritually, morally, and also physically, he is no longer the recreational officer, as he had to be during the World War. This task has been assigned to another commissioned officer.<sup>2</sup>

The first NLCA pastor to become a Navy chaplain, H. F. Hanson, quickly became famous as the director of the Blue-Jacket Choir of the Great Lakes Naval Training Station. The Choir was composed of men in their initial training as sailors, and was really a combination of thirteen choruses of nearly 1,000 voices.<sup>3</sup> Malmin said that "Chaplain Hanson has Navy in his blood. He served in it during World War I; he has been a chaplain in the

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<sup>1</sup>Wentz, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>"A Chaplain Describes Army Life," Lutheran Herald 25 (4 February 1941):112-113.

<sup>3</sup>U.S., Department of Defense, Bureau of Naval Personnel, History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, by Clifford Drury (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949, 2:236).



reserve since 1935; he was called for full time duty last November."<sup>1</sup>

Another chaplain entering active duty in 1940, O. K. Davidson, had served in the Army in 1918 as a private, and had been a member of the Reserve since 1933. As was the case with a number of NLCA parishes, his congregation granted him a leave of absence for the time of mobilization, as had been the case with Chaplain Stearns in World War I.<sup>2</sup>

Davidson said of his work in the Army prior to the beginning of hostilities:

I have distributed quite a number of New Testaments and portions of Scripture from the American Bible Society in my regiment. The men want the Scriptures. Now I am distributing the Gideon edition to men who make request. Yesterday was a pleasant day. After an inspiring service, I spent the rest of the day mostly in my tent. Men came singly and in groups to ask for New Testaments. I did not announce any distribution at the service. But on Saturday afternoon a sergeant came to my tent to get stationery for the men. I showed him a New Testament and he wanted one, autographed. He told another, and so the procession followed. Among those who came were two Jews. Their coming gave me an opportunity to have a little talk with all these men.<sup>3</sup>

J. A. Fjelstad, who had also been a chaplain in the First World War, wrote in appreciation for the prayer book supplied by the SC:

I wrote you once and complimented you on that wonderful prayer book. Since I've been in the hospital I've used it every day for my own personal devotion. --I appreciate it now more than ever. Even our Baptist and M.E. chaplain friends claim it's one of the best things we

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<sup>1</sup>O. G. Malmin, "You'll Like It!" Lutheran Herald 25 (18 March 1941):274.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 24 (24 September 1940):1000.

<sup>3</sup>News Letter 1 (2 July 1941).



have--and one of our priests here was distributing that prayer book to his men--I saw it!<sup>1</sup>

Fjelstad was probably referring to the Service Prayer Book, compiled and edited by Ylvisaker, which included hymns, an order of worship and Bible readings, and which was dedicated to the Army, Navy, Marine and Air Corps of the United States.<sup>2</sup>

About the same time H. R. Gregerson wrote his thanks for the work being done by the SC: "I want to say this that the National Lutheran Council is doing more for its chaplains than any other organization. None of the other chaplains are receiving so much material and encourage for their ministry from their church organizations."<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, because of a disability, Gregerson soon had to leave the service.

And Fjelstad died on August 25, 1941, at the Army and Navy Hospital, Hot Springs, Arkansas. Shortly after reporting for active duty he had contracted double pneumonia and this caused his death when it recurred some months later.<sup>4</sup>

But the military was conscious of the efforts made by the churches and their chaplains in ministering to their people in the service. In a rather unusual move, the senior admiral of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations H. R. Stark wrote to Ylvisaker:

In this connection I desire to express my personal thanks, and that of the naval service, for what the Lutheran Church has done and is doing toward assisting with the procurement of religious leaders to minister to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1940.

<sup>3</sup>News Letter 1 (2 July 1941).

<sup>4</sup>News Letter 1 (2 September 1941).



the personnel of the Navy and Marine Corps.<sup>1</sup>

By the time the Admiral wrote, shots had already been fired by the Nazis in anger at American Naval vessels, and a quiet, unknown at the time, but deadly war was being waged in the Atlantic.

Storaasli felt that the most effective work done by chaplains was that which took place in their personal contacts with the men.<sup>2</sup>

Sharing a like impression, and perhaps mindful of the death of Fjelstad, an older man, Carl Carlson, expressed his concerns in a letter to the Lutheran Herald, "How many of our Lutheran Chaplains are going out with the boys when they take to the field to fight for country and for freedom? . . . It should be of vital concern to our church to see to it that young pastors of our church apply for commissions as Chaplains in the armed forces which this year will increase tremendously."<sup>3</sup>

The tremendous influx of men into the services created a vast opportunity of service for chaplains. But sometimes the chaplains found themselves having difficulty in determining the religious preferences of the men they were to encounter. But in June, 1942, Ylvisaker was able to tell Long:

The matter of designation of religious preferences of the men who are inducted into military service, about which we have been complaining for so long and concerning changes in present regulations about which we have

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<sup>1</sup>News Letter 1 (2 October 1941).

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 26 (10 March 1942):253.

<sup>3</sup>Carlson to Malmin, Lutheran Herald 26 (27 January 1942):



approached the War Department so unsuccessfully to date, has now finally come to a head in the new Regulations just released by the War Department. Copy of these regulations which I am enclosing show that our difficulties are very much at an end and that Lutherans will be allowed to register in the same way as Catholics and Jews were ordered to register heretofore and that "Commanding Officers are permitted to furnish information as to religious preference of members of their Command to local churches and accredited denominational representatives on their request." This is a tremendous concession and will greatly facilitate the work of our Service Pastors and our Chaplains.<sup>1</sup>

Ylvisaker and Long exchanged voluminous correspondence throughout the war, almost all of it relating to the work of chaplains and Service Pastors.

Early in the forties, possibly earlier, the NLC developed a standard form which it sent to those whose names had been listed by men seeking ecclesiastical endorsement on their application for the chaplaincy. Among other things, the form stated that "Men of strong character, with ability to lead, with sympathetic understanding, who have a vital Gospel message for men are needed." Some of the questions asked were: "Are his religious convictions deep-rooted or merely conventional?" and "Does he have a living Christian message?" The candidate's personal qualities were to be checked on a scale of "Poor, Medium, Good" for such things as "Sense of Humor, Initiative, Cooperativeness, Liking for People," and "Executive Ability."<sup>2</sup>

Chaplain Ansgar Sovik displayed some of those qualities when he reported how he had baptized a man while in the South Pacific battle zone:

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<sup>1</sup>Ylvisaker to Long, 22 June 1942, SC - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>On file at the Division of Service to Military Personnel, Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., Washington, D.C.



Yesterday I baptized one of the men here. He gathered some of his friends together, a group who have been meeting together for prayer in the evenings. I emptied a canteen of water into my helmet and used that as a font. I have no Altar Book anymore; so I just read from Matt 28:19-20 and John 3:1-17. Then the man knelt on the ground and I baptized him, using as much of the ritual services as I remembered. It was crude, ecclesiastically, but it's good to know that it isn't the externals that make the sacrament effective. We had water, the Word, and prayer . . ."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps an extreme example of the need for "Liking for People" and "Executive Ability" was given by Chaplain C. E. Skoien when he reported:

I have had 12,490 contacts during the past month with officers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted men, relatives, and Air Corps cadets; visited 580 in the hospital and 594 outside the hospital; distributed 862 New Testaments and 1,643 religious tracts; held 125 private devotions and 129 office consultations; assisted in four disciplinary cases and cleared nineteen welfare cases; conducted three weddings, and held two civilian services in neighboring towns.<sup>2</sup>

As the war continued, experiences of chaplains demonstrated that they were going where the action was. Sovik was aboard the transport ship George F. Elliot when it was hit by an enemy plane 8 August 1942. The ship caught fire, burned all day and finally sank, taking with it most of Sovik's gear.<sup>3</sup> Chaplain G. V. Tollefson received a Letter of Commendation for ". . . conducting religious services under fire, ministering to the wounded and dying, and taking a leading part in the burial of the dead."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sovik to Malmin, 16 September 1942, Lutheran Herald 26 (1 December 1942):1280.

<sup>2</sup>C.E. Skoien, "They Serve on Two Fronts," Lutheran Herald 26 (1 December 1942):1282.

<sup>3</sup>Drury, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 187.



Chaplain N. G. Anderson, as the result of his wounds, spent over ten months in the hospital. He had just given first aid to two men when a shell exploded nearby. One man was killed; he and two others were wounded.<sup>1</sup> In 1945 Chaplain Harry Montgomery was killed while on the front lines in Italy.

Some of the chaplains wrote about their experiences. Chaplain Carl Opsahl told of how he had ministered aboard a troop ship:

There was no Transport Chaplain aboard and the Ship Commander gave me free hand to arrange and hold services the best way I could. Because of the crowded conditions the task looked impossible. It was solved by going into every compartment where the men were. Four services were held on Sundays and two every week day in an endeavor to bring the Gospel to the multitudes.<sup>2</sup>

When Chaplain E. R. Jacobson returned from the South Pacific War Zone, he reported that "Lutheran boys are very good at attending services, not only Lutheran services; but chaplains of other denominations have come to me and said, 'Your Lutheran boys are the backbone of my services.'"<sup>3</sup>

Sometimes worship services could be conducted in a base chapel. But often times services had to be conducted when a few spare moments could be found on the battle-field. Chaplain G. L. Belgum wrote from somewhere in France:

In a few minutes I am leaving for some of our gun positions, where I can catch a few men at a time for prayer and a few words of spiritual first aid. These days are

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 190.      <sup>2</sup>News Letter 4 (3 February 1944).

<sup>3</sup>News Letter 4 (2 December 1944):6.



trying, and our men are afraid. Yes, afraid. But I can give them the message of Christ again, and now they will hear, if they have not before. Today and tomorrow (Sunday) they will hear, and God will take from them the gnawing, numbing, agonizing fear that comes with 88s and snipers and hedgerows of death - oh, do not forget us in your prayers!<sup>1</sup>

And Chaplain N. R. Halvorson, also in France, said:

Since our coming we have had some varied experiences. I waded ashore to the beaches and up the hills into France; experienced what it was to sleep in trenches amid the din of guns, awakened periodically by weird noises and strange sights in the skies. Under sun and cloud and in dust and mud, chapel and field I have held services for the men in these short weeks in France.<sup>2</sup>

Where space, time and conditions allowed, chaplains would offer Communion with the regular service. Chaplain A. M. Kraabel explained how he managed things aboard a troop ship:

Following the ship's service, there was a General Protestant Communion Service, and a Lutheran Communion Service in the Ship's Library. Lt. Col. E. Elliot Ursin, son of a Lutheran pastor, played the piano. Many of our Lutheran men and women, enlisted men, WACS, Navy and Army officers, knelt on the floor for the confession and absolution, and then knelt again as they received the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in His Holy Sacrament.<sup>3</sup>

Chaplain's Assistant Cpl. Erwin B. Overby reported how his Chaplain, O. A. Rust, handled the request of a man for Protestant Communion. Chaplain Rust said in effect that "God is not limited to the acts of men and can, if a man has no other means and if his prayer is for the true meaning of our Sacrament, receive also there the Divine assurance of forgiveness through the Sacrament - the

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<sup>1</sup>News Letter 4 (2 September 1944).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>A. M. Kraabel, "Beautiful Isle of Somewhere," News Letter 4 (2 November 1944):8.



body and blood of Christ."<sup>1</sup>

In 1943 the Service Commission of the National Lutheran Council held a joint meeting with the Army-Navy Commission of the Missouri Synod to discuss the problem of inter-communion. Missouri stated that "In exceptional cases syndical fellowship is not a necessary pre-condition for admission to the Lord's Supper. We must guard against legalism on the one hand and laxity on the other."<sup>2</sup>

Although positive proof cannot be given, it seems likely that most NLCA chaplains considered the battle-field an "exceptional case." But at least judging by Storaasli's reaction later, there must have been considerable laxity on how and to whom communion was administered.

In the terrible shared experiences of the war, NLCA chaplains began to voice a concern for greater unity in the Christian family of churches. Chaplain Skoien recalled how war-time needs had brought about a co-operative ministry by men of many different faiths. In the winter of 1943-44 he had been on the front lines. There he had baptized a man as a Baptist. For a font he had used a helmet shell belonging to a Roman Catholic. And a Jewish man had supplied the water out of his own canteen's meager supply.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>E. B. Overby, "Lutheran Communion in India," News Letter 5 (2 July 1945):11.

<sup>2</sup>"Minutes, Service Commission of the National Lutheran Council in joint meeting with the Army-Navy Commission of the Missouri Synod," 24 January, 1943, SC - Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>C. E. Skoien, "Another Chaplain Looks Ahead," Lutheran Herald 29 (23 October 1945):794-795.



Another chaplain wrote: "We chaplains are finding a real harmony together, and so it should be at home; it will be if we half try. I believe this unity will come through the chaplains as they come home."<sup>1</sup> Chaplain Grevstad, shortly after the war had ended, urged:

Now that the vast and complicated problems of the post-war period confront the world, it is my prayer and earnest hope that the National Lutheran Council will employ its organizational efficiency, vision, and unselfish devotion to their solution. The crisis of war has brought the various groups of Lutheranism together, driven by a common need. They can be kept together if they are given the opportunity to work together.<sup>2</sup>

During the war the editor of the church paper, at the same time that he printed a plea for more chaplain volunteers, suggested that "Plans should be in the making now for a program of post-war expansion which will make it possible for every chaplain to re-enter the civilian ministry as soon as his war-time service is ended."<sup>3</sup> So far as is known, nothing was done about his proposal.

But the NLCA did invite its chaplains to attend the church's convention and made its invitation real by paying their expenses. In 1944 one hundred chaplains were invited.<sup>4</sup>

For the first time in 1943, men graduating from the seminary were immediately commissioned as chaplains. But the Navy alone followed this policy during the war. The Navy had what

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<sup>1</sup>"A Chaplain Looks Ahead," Lutheran Herald 29 (31 July 1945):543.

<sup>2</sup>"Chaplain Voices Plea for Lutheran Unity," News Letter 5 (2 November 1945):12.

<sup>3</sup>"More Chaplains Needed," Lutheran Herald 27 (10 August 1943):648.

<sup>4</sup>Lutheran Herald 28 (6 June 1944):475.



was called the V-12 program, under which financial support was given to theological students who were later to become Navy chaplains.<sup>1</sup>

For the NLCA one of the most dramatic episodes involving its chaplains occurred in early 1945. A daughter and son-in-law of Aasgaard, Pastor Carroll Hinderlie and his wife, Mary, had been interred by the Japanese occupation forces in Manila in the Philippines in 1941. The Hinderlies had been on their way to China as missionaries when the war had broken out. Chaplain Kraabel was with the forces that liberated them and the other missionaries imprisoned there. In two letters dated February 27 and March 7, 1945, he told of their tearful meeting and was able to send the welcome news that all were alive and, considering what they had gone through, quite well.<sup>2</sup>

After the war had ended, Malmin wrote, at the request of Ylvisaker, "A Letter to Chaplains," in which he gave a three-fold answer to a question raised by a chaplain. The chaplain had asked, "What does the Church think of us?" Malmin replied:

First of all, I believe the Church thinks of you as their representatives in doing a ministry which belongs to us all, and which you are doing in a manner of which you may be humbly proud. . . .

Second, I believe that when the Church thinks about you and prays for you it does so realizing that the Church needs you. Some of you will be remaining in the service; and the Church needs you there. Most of you will be returning to civilian pastorates; and the Church needs you there. Fields in every synod and body the country over are "white unto harvest." And it is still

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<sup>1</sup>Klug, p. 88.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 29 (3 April 1945).



true that "the laborers are few." . . .

I believe that the Church realizes that your return to the civilian ministry will be one of the most salutary experiences in the history of the Church. Your viewpoint, your experience, your vision will be priceless (if perhaps a bit disturbing) in the life of the Church.<sup>1</sup>

One concern many of the returning chaplains brought with them was the need for and appreciation of the work of Foreign Missions. Perhaps typical was the comment of Chaplain Dale J. Simons:

It is not everyone who has the privilege of viewing at first hand the results of the contribution he gives to his Church for the cause of Foreign Missions, although that experience has come in increasing frequency to those Americans who have served in the Pacific during the war.

. . . More and more we come to realize, I hope, that we live in a world community, and no place in it is outside our neighborhood. "Foreign" is a word that must be banished from our thinking. Not only is the need of our brother around the world for the knowledge of Christ just as great as that of our brother next door; but it has become just as imperative to our own happiness and satisfaction that our brother around the world know the love of God and the Gospel of peace as that we have these blessings ourselves, and our brother next door. Missionaries are paramount, but there are no foreigners. We all belong to the world, and the lives of all men reflect and bear upon the happiness of every home.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps it was also the concern of men returning from the chaplaincy that helped account for the tremendous increase in the church's missions program, both home and foreign, in the years following the war. Despite the end of mission work in China in 1949, the church began new work in Hong Kong that same year. Work had already begun in South America, and new fields were also

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<sup>1</sup>News Letter 5 (2 October 1945):2.

<sup>2</sup>"Who Is My Neighbor?" News Letter 4 (2 December 1944):6.



established in Formosa and even in Japan itself.<sup>1</sup> And at home a vigorous policy directed by the church resulted in the establishment of many new congregations in the post-war years, at least forty being started in 1954 alone.<sup>2</sup>

Two men who served as chaplains in the war were later to have much to do with the church's growing involvement in the concerns of the military chaplaincy. One man, Orlando Ingvoldstad, Jr., did his work after the period covered by this report. But the other man, Engebret Midboe, was to be deeply involved, together with Storaasli, with such concerns.

Many returning chaplains were to become highly involved in other phases of the church's work. The prognostication of Malmin proved true.

During the years of the Second World War the church had an all-time high number of pastors on active duty as chaplains. And there had been several firsts, by the time the war ended in 1945. The church, through its service people, had been exposed to the work of foreign missions in an unprecedented way. And for the first time, men had gone directly from the seminary into the chaplaincy, albeit only the Navy at this time.

But in most ways, apart from the length and extent of the conflict, World War II was a repetition of World War I, in so far as the church's involvement with the military was concerned. In both instances able men of the NLCA worked vigorously

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<sup>1</sup>E. Clifford Nelson, The Lutheran Church Among Norwegian-Americans, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Sugsborg Publishing House, 1960), 2:257.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 265.



to protect and advance the cause of its chaplains. In both cases the church through its chaplains at first responded with eager enthusiasm to the needs of the moment, but before peace came urgent appeals had to be made for more men. And in both cases, after the cessation of hostilities, most men immediately went back to civilian life. Also in both instances, the interest of the church sharply waned once the "boys" were safely home. With the death of Larsen in 1923, the NLCSSW ceased to exist. For a time after Ylvisaker resigned in 1947 the SC had no head, although it was renamed the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel in 1948.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### NO FIGHTING, NO PEACE (1946-1949)

After the cessation of hostilities in 1945 the nation and the church thought they could go back to "business as usual." The number of chaplains on active duty reflected this feeling. In 1946, eighty-three men were in the military. Most of them, like the people they served, were to be released from active duty that year. The next year, 1947, only eight chaplains were to remain on duty. In 1948 Storaasli retired. And in 1949 only four chaplains would be in the service. During this era, only one man, T. H. Collin, came on active duty for the first time. It was a period of sharp retrenchment.

But international affairs were different than after World War I. The increasing tensions of the "cold war" and the Communist victory in what had been the church's largest mission field, China, meant that things could never be the same. Also there was an increasingly strident drive for independence by the colonies of the European powers. The Philippines became independent of the United States in 1946; India was freed of British rule in 1947, Red China became a reality in 1949. But by 1949 all the Eastern European countries in which Russian troops were stationed were no longer free and independent states.

Unlike what had happened after World War I, when the church's concern for chaplains had virtually ceased, and the



NLCSSW had been disbanded and its few remaining functions absorbed by the NLC, after World War II the church kept in operation an organization exclusively concerned with military affairs. To be sure, Ylvisaker conducted what was in effect a "clean up" operation of the SC until he retired in 1947. But on March 1, 1948, the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, a unit of the NLC, came into being.<sup>1</sup> The BSMP was to play a key role as the church moved from responding to an emergency situation such as World Wars I and II to a continuing involvement in the armed services of the United States.

Immediately after the Second World War, however, the problem the church faced was the placement of chaplains seeking civilian parishes. Despite the earlier suggestion of Malmin, the editor of the church's paper, apparently nothing had been done to prepare for this situation. As a result, many chaplains discharged from the service spent many months waiting for a call. The writer knows personally of a man who had to wait nearly a year. In an effort to help, Aasgaard in a rather extraordinary move in 1946 published the names of all men who had been or were still chaplains and urged the church to find room for those who were seeking parishes upon their return to civilian life.<sup>2</sup>

Marking another transition, the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America at its convention in 1946 changed its name to the

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<sup>1</sup>News Bulletin 1 (December 1948).

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 30 (21 May 1946):520-521



Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC).

There was scant news from the few chaplains who were on duty during this era. But later L. S. Gjerde recalled a temporary chapel he had served in during 1947: "For want of a chapel, services were held in a former brewery building which the Navy had acquired. The Catholic chaplain who previously served on the station had rigged up a movable altar and backdrop which transformed the place into a very worshipful atmosphere".<sup>1</sup>

Obviously, the lush days of World War II when it seemed as if chapels were springing up everywhere were over. From now on, in most cases, chaplains would have to scramble for whatever space could be found.

Another development during these years was the establishment of the Air Force as a separate service branch. And at first, strange provisions were made for chaplain coverage, but after some objections by the Air Force, things were changed:

At the outset, provisions were made for Army chaplains to serve with the Air Force on a 4-year rotation policy. However, from the standpoint of the Air Force, this policy did not provide a satisfactory chaplaincy program, and by mutual agreement, a separate Air Force chaplaincy was established in May 1949.<sup>2</sup>

#### Formation and Work of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel

But for the ELC the most important event in these years took place in 1948. In that year Storaasli retired from the army

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<sup>1</sup>Drury, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup>Report to the President, p. 9.



with the rank of colonel. Among other things he had been the second chief of chaplains of the Army and at retirement was the Commandant of the Chaplain School at Fort Benning. But immediately after retiring from the Army he became executive secretary of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel of the National Lutheran Council (BSMP).<sup>1</sup> There he would exert much influence on both the ELC and the military on behalf of the chaplaincy. More than anyone else, he was the one responsible for the church becoming involved on a continuing basis with the chaplaincy and the military.

The NLC defined the duties and functions of the BSMP in its relations with chaplains as follows:

1. To supervise a developing program of spiritual ministry for men and women of the church in the armed forces.
2. To carry on studies of the military program of our country and maintain contact with all agencies developing and supervising this program, especially the offices of the Chiefs of Chaplains of the Army, Navy and Air Forces.
3. To assume responsibility for the allocation of complete quota coverage of federally appointed National Lutheran Council chaplains for service in the Army, Navy and Air Force. . . .
4. To serve as a clearing agency for the endorsement of chaplains from the National Lutheran Council churches for service in the Army, Navy and Air Force and National Guard.
5. To give attention to programs for the specialized training of chaplains.
6. To maintain regular contacts by reports and correspondence with all chaplains from National Lutheran Council churches in the armed forces, including specific reports of ministerial acts for transmission to the respective church bodies.
7. To serve as a clearing house for problems reported by or concerning such chaplains, either of a personal nature or in relationship with other chaplains in the

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<sup>1</sup>Office of Public Relations.



armed forces, other church organizations and military authorities.

8. To prepare and distribute suitable literature and supplies.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly the BSMP was meant to function for a long time; it was not to be a short-range response only to a one-time emergency situation, as the NLCSSW and the SC had been. One suspects that Ylvisaker had a lot to do with the determining of the objectives for the BSMP.

At one of its first meetings, the BSMP gave the following directives for the field work of its executive secretary, Storaasli:

1. He shall visit existing Service Centers, evaluating their programs, submitting his findings and recommendations through the secretary of the Bureau.

2. Visit military installations and contact military authorities for the purpose of making a comprehensive study of present and future needs.

3. Assist the Secretary of the Bureau in planning and conducting a series of regional conferences for Lutheran chaplains and service pastors.

4. Make a study of areas of strength and weakness in our ministry to Service personnel<sup>2</sup> on the basis of our war-time and peace-time experience.

At the same time, it was reported that ". . . the Bureau now gathers all information regarding applicants for endorsement as chaplains but that the final endorsement is made by the Executive Director of the Council, on the basis of the information

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<sup>1</sup>News Bulletin 1 (December 1948).

<sup>2</sup>"Minutes of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," May 20, 1948, p. 7, Archives of CL.



gathered by the Bureau."<sup>1</sup>

Aasgaard at this time, himself, personally not only recommended but wrote a letter of endorsement addressed to Storaasli for every ELC man applying for a chaplaincy appointment.<sup>2</sup> Prior to World War II Aasgaard had simply written a letter of recommendation to Roy Guild, the executive secretary of the General Committee on Army and Navy Chaplains.<sup>3</sup> The Lutherans were running their own show now, and they had tightened up their procedures, so that the church presidents could use the proper nomenclature in their dealings with the military.

In 1948 members of the BSMP felt that the need for recruiting chaplains remained urgent. They were concerned that the Lutheran Church should have its proper share of chaplains, both with respect to other Protestant bodies, and especially with regard to the Roman Catholic Church, which was said to have an active recruitment program. And, presaging what would later happen in the ELC, it was recommended that "A working arrangement with the presidents of the general bodies should be developed by which the chaplaincy as a specialized ministry may be presented favorably to men whose aptitudes lie in that direction."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Aasgaard to Storaasli, 26 October 1949, J. A. Aasgaard papers, Archives of the ELC.

<sup>3</sup>Aasgaard to Guild, 28 February 1936, N. R. Halvorson file, DSMP - LUCUSA

<sup>4</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel," 23 September 1948, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel file, Archives of the ELC.



The BSMP from the first avowed that one of its serious purposes was to keep in close touch with chaplains on active duty. A News Bulletin, successor to the monthly News Letter, which had been published on a monthly basis by the SC and edited by Ylvisaker, was sent out to chaplains on a fairly regular basis. Storaasli was said to be eminently suited for the task of editing the periodical: "He was known in the Army as the 'writing chaplain' who kept in touch with his men."<sup>1</sup> As subsequent events proved, the BSMP's expectations were amply fulfilled by Storaasli.

And Storaasli took vigorous charge of the BSMP. It was likely on the basis of what he had discovered and at his prodding that the executive director of the NLC, Paul Empie, sent a memo to the presidents of the NLC participating bodies on the subject of the reporting of pastoral acts by chaplains. In the memo Empie noted:

There seems to be no uniformity at present practice as to the performance and reporting of pastoral acts by chaplains. Very commonly, men are given instruction and baptized or confirmed, without any attempt at affiliation with a local congregation, and without any report either to the general body or the Service Bureau. Children of Lutherans and non-Lutherans are frequently baptized into the Christian faith, without the baptism being recorded in any congregational record book.

This is not universally true, of course. Some chaplains invariably follow through by correspondence to establish local affiliation for those baptized or confirmed. In addition, some of these report the official act to their general body or to the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel for transmission to the general body. Other do neither. Some who do report to the Bureau do not make contact with the local congregation.

The whole picture is confused and reveals many irregularities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5

<sup>2</sup>"Inter Office Memorandum," 4 December 1948, National Lutheran Council, Archives of the ELC.



Doubtless the findings of the BSMP reflected the lack of supervision that had existed in the war years. The church simply had not developed very much in the way of guidelines for the conduct of the ministry of its chaplains. Much of the reason for that lay in a basic ignorance of how the military system worked. Having been a part of the system for so long, Storaasli's experience was invaluable. One thing that Storaasli had learned well was the need for standardization of procedures. Undoubtedly Storaasli's concern lay behind the request Empic made of the church presidents:

In an effort to clarify and standardize the procedure, the following questions, dealing with the policies involved, are submitted to general body presidents:

1. Should a chaplain performing an infant baptism have the baptism recorded with the home congregation of one of the parents?
2. Should a chaplain performing an adult baptism or confirmation have the name of the one so confessing his faith entered on the roll of some congregation?
3. Should a chaplain performing a marriage have it recorded on some congregational record book?
4. Are chaplains of your general body at present, when performing a baptism, confirmation, marriage or other pastoral acts, expected to report the data to your office? If not, would you regard this procedure as desirable?
5. Should a chaplain performing a baptism, confirmation, or marriage, report the data to the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel for transmission to the general body?<sup>1</sup>

The questions reflected a great change that had occurred in the BSMP and its antecedent bodies concerning its perception of its mission and function. Prior to this time, the idea seemed to have been to perform a short-time service in an emergency

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



situation to people who, although at the moment were in the military, were basically civilians and who would shortly be returning to civilian life and pursuits. The new perception was that the BSMP had also to minister to a situation that would be more or less permanent and to people who would be making a career out of service in the military. Since the Lutheran churches had not and would not recognize military chapel groups as congregations, the question of where and how to record pastoral acts was a germane one.

Changes made in procedures by the military also at times mandated changes for the procedures of the churches and the BSMP. In December, 1948, the BSMP was informed that:

The need for streamlining indorsement procedures is made more emphatic by a new ruling by the Department of the Army that the Chief of Chaplains office must act on applications for extended active duty within 72 hours of receiving the application. If a chaplain's application for recall is not supported by ecclesiastical indorsement, it must be turned down by the Chief's office.

This means that the processing of the ecclesiastical indorsement must precede the chaplain's formal application for recall. We have publicized this fact as much as possible, including an NLC News Bureau release prepared by Chaplain Storaasli. In some cases where the indorsement was already being processed, it was necessary to take short-cuts by getting approval for indorsement from the proper officials by long-distance telephone, with the indorsement on paper following in the regular manner.<sup>1</sup>

Storaasli, of course, wise in the ways and workings of the military bureaucracy, knew how and what short-cuts could be made.

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 15 December 1948, p. 18, Archives of CL.



Another policy change by the military announced at the same meeting of the BSMP was that the Army was now accepting applications for the chaplaincy from men who had had no parish experience. As the Navy had done since 1943, the Army would now accept as chaplains men just graduating from the seminary. The BSMP was further told that "The Army may wish to send chaplains on active duty to theological seminaries to present the appeal to serve in the chaplaincy."<sup>1</sup>

The BSMP was leary of recommending that the Army be allowed to do this. Chaplain Storaasli was better suited for this task, they felt. The Army itself could not have found a more suitable person. The BSMP voted:

To authorize Chaplain Storaasli, through Dr. Empie, to convey the information to the presidents of the general bodies and to inquire as to possible approaches to seminaries regarding such visits. It was understood that in cases where such visits are approved, Chaplain Storaasli is to be free to make them.<sup>2</sup>

By this action, the BSMP had set another important precedent for the future. In the fifties, Storaasli was to make many such visits, wearing his Army chaplain's uniform, to the campus of Luther Theological Seminary.

By early 1949 NLC chaplains were required to make a monthly report of their activities to the BSMP. Among other things they had to give the number of Lutheran communion services they had held and the number of communicants. As Storaasli analyzed those reports, it became apparent to him that a variety

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



of interpretations existed:

Some conduct only Lutheran communion services, and get another chaplain or civilian pastor to conduct the general Protestant Communion service; some conduct both the general Protestant communion service and also communion services specifically for Lutherans; some conduct only the general Protestant communion service, using the Lutheran liturgy. The last group feel that since Lutheran personnel are welcome at this general service, they have discharge their obligation to the Lutherans under their care; and they report this service as a "Lutheran communion service."<sup>1</sup>

This discovery bothered Storaasli at the time; as the years passed it became one of his chief concerns. At the time, the BSMP voted "That Chaplain Storaasli be commended for his emphasis on a specific ministry to Lutheran men by Lutheran chaplains, and that his interpretation that a "Lutheran communion" should be announced as such, be approved."<sup>2</sup>

By 2 February 1949 the replies of the church presidents to Empic's memo regarding the reporting of pastoral acts by chaplains had finally all been received. The BSMP on the basis of those replies suggested the following standard procedures:

1. An infant baptism should be reported to the home congregation of one of the parents, for entry on the congregational records. In cases where neither parent has a current congregational affiliation, the chaplain should press the importance of such active affiliation and seek to have the parents name a congregation to which the baptism can be reported.
2. An adult baptism or confirmation should be reported to the congregation in which the person baptized or

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes of Bureau of Service to Military Personnel," 2 February 1949, p. 3, Archives of Lutheranism, National Lutheran Council, New York.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



confirmed wishes to become an active confirmed member. In cases where the person concerned has no present congregational tie, the chaplain should assist him in selecting a church home; probably in his home community, the community to which he expects to go on separation from the service, or a community near the location where the baptism or confirmation takes place.

3. A marriage should be reported to the home congregation of the bride or groom, for entry on the congregational records.

4. Infant and adult baptisms, confirmation, and marriages should be reported monthly to the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel on forms provided for that purpose. Reports should be in duplicate, so that the Bureau may forward copies to report to the presidents or proper committees of the general bodies with which the chaplains are affiliated.<sup>1</sup>

It is doubtful whether the BSMP had fully considered the implications of chaplains ministering to career military personnel, even though they acknowledged its reality and were attempting to deal with it. This is most evident when statement two is analyzed. There would be little difficulty if an ELC chaplain baptized a convert while both were stationed in Minnesota and the convert was from the state; plenty of ELC churches were scattered throughout the state. But if the convert were, for example, from South Carolina, and both he and the chaplain were stationed there, a difficulty could well arise. There were no ELC congregations in the entire state. What would the convert do, especially if he wished to remain in his home state upon his retirement from the service? That this is not a spurious example

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<sup>1</sup>"Exhibit A, Memo to National Lutheran Council Chaplains Regarding the Reporting of Pastoral Acts, Minutes, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel," 2 February 1949, Archives of Cooperative Lutheranism, New York.



is indicated by the fact that most military installations are located in precisely those areas where the ELC had few, if any, congregations.

In another move that he would repeat numerous times in the future, Storaasli sent a book to all NLC chaplains on active duty in 1949. The book was Dr. Herman Preus' The Communion of Saints. Storaasli thought it would make stimulating reading for the chaplains, and expressed the ". . . hope that this book might stimulate a livelier faith in the power of God's Word as a Means of Grace, and inspire a deeper sense of loyalty to all that the Lutheran Church stands for."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly Storaasli had not lost his own sense of Lutheran identity from his years of service in the chaplaincy; just as clearly he was worried that some chaplains were in danger of doing so.

He wanted church leaders to support the chaplaincy. In a bulletin he sent NLC chaplains he reported on a conference of Association of Executives of Ecclesiastical Indorsing Agencies for Federal Chaplaincies which he had attended. He said that one topic of interest that had commanded top interest was: "What can be done to persuade the church leaders to give the chaplaincies a higher priority in their thinking and in their planning?"<sup>2</sup> And he said that "The consenses among many of the agencies is that the military chaplaincy as a field for spiritual ministry

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 31 March 1949, p. 7, Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>News Bulletin 11 (October 1949):2.



should be given the same weight as is now given to Home Missions; that the procurement of chaplains is definitely the responsibility of the churches; and that the chaplaincy, because of its being a specialized ministry, stands in need of the same high type clergy-personnel as is required in the other more important positions in the church."<sup>1</sup>

#### Establishment of the Armed Forces Chaplains Board

An important step concerning chaplains was taken in July, 1949, when the Secretary of Defense established the Armed Forces Chaplains Board within his office. The Board consisted of each of the three Chiefs of Chaplains with an additional chaplain from each of the services. A special consultant of Jewish matters was also a member of the Board. The Board was given the responsibility of making ". . . recommendations to the Secretary of Defense with respect to a unified policy on procurement, qualifications and training of chaplains, . . . and on standards of equipment and supply."<sup>2</sup> In some respects this Board was the military counter-part of, for example, the BSMP. The establishment of this Board was another recognition by the government that the chaplaincy was a permanent institution within the military and that it would have a permanent function. The Armed Forces Chaplains Board was charged with the responsibility of ". . . maintaining close relationships with civilian churches."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Report to the President, p. 10

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Showing how thoroughly Army chaplains had become a part of the military establishment, a report in 1950 said that:

"Following the war, Army chaplains have come to have an ever more important place in military life. Serving as they do on character guidance councils, welfare fund councils, clemency boards, and the like, they exert a moral influence upon military life which is in keeping with the desires of the American public."<sup>1</sup>

The same report gave a brief synopsis of the regulations governing the duties of the chaplains of each of the three services:

As set forth by regulations, the Navy considers its Chaplains "responsible for the performance of all duties relating to the religious activities of the command;" the Army describes its chaplains' duties "as analogous to those performed by clergymen in civilian life, modified by the distinctive conditions attached to military life" and the Air Force portrays the Air Force Chaplain "as specialist in the field of religion and as such is the advisor to the commanding general/commanding officer on all matters pertaining to the religious life, morals, morale and character guidance within given commands."<sup>2</sup>

Thus by the end of 1949 the chaplaincy had been recognized by both the church and the government as a permanent, needed institution that had to have continuing guidance and supports.

Within the NLC the BSMP had been organized, and with Storaasli at its head, had begun an exceedingly effective work. In these few years many steps were taken that were to have long-lasting consequences. Although the number of ELC chaplains on active duty was very small, as little as four by 1949, the church had nonetheless taken big steps toward permanent involvement in the affairs of the military. And these steps had been taken

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



largely with the assistance and by the guidance of one man,  
Gynther Storaasli.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### KOREA - WAR AGAIN (1950-1954)

Major changes took place within the ELC in its relations with chaplains in the years 1950-1954.

The era began in the relative peace of the "cold war." But by 1954 thousands of men had again donned uniforms and gone off to war. By 1954 a truce had been arranged in far-off Korea. But the tensions remained high. And the nation and the church had to deal with the implications of the fact that for the first time in history the armed forces of the United States had not won a decisive victory in war.

At home the fear of communism was increased by the tactics of Senator McCarthy from Wisconsin. The warnings of the dangers of nuclear war competed for attention with a tremendous revival of interest in religion, aided by the Crusades of Evangelist Billy Graham.

In 1954 the long-time president of the ELC, Dr. J. A. Aasgaard, retired, to be succeeded by Dr. F. Schiotz. Also in 1954, Storaasli would retire as executive secretary of the BSMP, having reached the mandatory retirement age of 65. But the ELC had set no such policy for itself, and Storaasli found new work as head of a relatively new commission in the ELC charged with the mission of caring for its chaplains.



In June, 1950, North Korean forces attacked South Korea, thus shattering the uneasy peace of the post-World War II era.

This time the church did not have to establish a new organization to deal with the crisis, as it had had to do in the First World War, nor did it have to reactivate a commission, as it had done prior to World War II. In 1950 the church had the BSMP, ably headed by Storaasli, already in existence.

#### Need for Chaplains

But the BSMP was soon very busy, both urging the veterans of the Second World War to return to duty and imploring other men to join the chaplaincy for the first time. The response was nowhere near as great or enthusiastic as it had been in the early days of World War II. Despite the best efforts of the BSMP, by 1954 only thirty-nine men were on active duty, less than half the number of those who had served in 1944, 1945 and 1946. Only thirteen veterans of the Second World War also saw duty in this era.

It was not due to lack of trying. Every year from 1950 on, Aasgaard, no doubt urged by Storaasli, in his annual messages to the church, pleaded for more chaplains. In 1951 he said:

Many pastors are joining the chaplaincy service. Some of them were in the service during the last war and are again accepting calls to the chaplaincy. Some are in the Naval Reserve and still of the proper age. It is hoped that a number of men in the service ages will again this very important work. The Church must go with her men as far as possible, whether in the training camps at home or in the fields abroad.

During the last war our Chruch supplied 132 chaplains. In the present military forces, which will eventually number between three and four million men, there will be need for a great number of chaplains. Our national Lutheran Council should stand ready to furnish



the quotas assigned them, as their spiritual responsibility to our nation and to the men in the service.<sup>1</sup>

Earlier that year the Lutheran Herald had reported that:

Chaplains of all faiths on active duty in the armed forces of the United States on April 1 numbered 2,695, according to information from the Department of Defense. About 500 more are needed to bring the corps to the minimum standards desired.

In the Army, on April 1, there were 1,287 chaplains on duty, or approximately one for every 1,000 soldiers. The Army would like to have one chaplain for every 850 troops. The Navy had 608 chaplains in service, and needs 130 more to meet its minimum requirements. The Air Force had 800 chaplains and seeks 100 more.

All of the services are seeking clergymen between the ages of 24 and 31.<sup>2</sup>

It will be noted that the age limit had dropped drastically from the 45 years suggested by the Army in the years following World War I. That age limit of 31 of course precluded many of the ELC veteran chaplains from re-applying for active duty.

Nevertheless, in September Storaasli stated the need for many more Lutheran chaplains. He said that "The Air Force has at present openings for 27 Lutheran chaplains between the ages of 21-33. The Navy needs new chaplains at the rate of 20 a month."<sup>3</sup> But even so, at the end of the year only twelve ELC men were on active duty.

In 1952 Aasgaard added a new note in his request for chaplains. He stated:

There is opportunity for pastors to serve for a limited time or for extended service, as they and their superiors may determine.

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<sup>1</sup>"Excerpt From President's Annual Message To Church (1951) The Military Chaplaincy," MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 35 (22 May 1951):522.

<sup>3</sup>Lutheran Herald 35 (18 September 1951):887.



There is need for pastors who will make the chaplaincy a lifetime service. The Roman and Episcopal Churches have a number of men who have given their entire life to this service.<sup>1</sup>

In 1953 Aasgaard said in part:

This report would be remiss if it did not speak plainly on the Chaplaincy situation in our Church body. On Sunday, May 17, five men were ordained to the Chaplaincy under the call of the Church Council. These men were graduated from Luther Seminary in the afternoon of the same day. The Department of Defense, representing the three arms of the military service - Air Force, Army and Navy - needs far more chaplains from our church. A number of men in the Reserve from the last war will be entering the service. It is hoped that many of them will see it as the will of God that they once again take up these duties. It would be a great contribution to the Chaplaincy Service if a number of the men, within the age limit and now serving parishes, could take time out and give this service to their country. It is of great value that men going into this work have had parish experience because the problems are the same - the teaching and preaching of the Word of God, the counseling and pastoral help to individuals and the administration of the Sacraments. It is really the Church in service in the military establishments, with the Means of Grace and dealing with individual souls.<sup>2</sup>

In 1954 Aasgaard repeated his earlier calls for men to not only enter the chaplaincy for a short while but to make it a life career.<sup>3</sup> In the span of the years 1951-1954 the president of the church had changed the content of his appeal. In the first year he was thinking of the need for short-time service. But shortly he was also emphasizing the need for career chaplains.

Aasgaard's change of attitude must have come in large measure from his increasingly close contacts with Storaasli.

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<sup>1</sup>"Excerpt From President's Annual Message to Church (1952) The Military Chaplaincy," MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>"Excerpt From President's Annual Message to Church (1953) The Military Chaplaincy," MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>3</sup>"Excerpt From President's Annual Message to Church (1954) The Military Chaplaincy," MCC - Archives of the ELC.



When Storaasli's son Paul, a Marine Captain, was killed in action in Korea in late 1950, Aasgaard sent the family a letter of condolence.<sup>1</sup>

In these years the Lutheran Herald issued frequent calls for chaplains.<sup>2</sup> And the paper also published full-page length or more articles written by the chaplains themselves in an effort to gain more participants in their work.<sup>3</sup>

### Experiences of Chaplains

Chaplain Walter Nordby was one of those ELC chaplains who was a veteran of World War II and who had remained in the Reserves. Like some others, he had been involuntarily recalled to active duty. But of his second experience he said, "I have learned much more during this tour in Korea and Pendleton than I did all during the last war."<sup>4</sup> Nordby went on:

A chaplain recalled to duty from his civilian parish finds that there is little here in Korea to remind him of the vast sweep and scope of the fast moving actions of

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<sup>1</sup>J. A. Aasgaard to Dr. and Mrs. Gynther Storaasli, 11 December 1950, J. A. Aasgaard file, Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example, "Chaplains Are Needed," Lutheran Herald 35 (27 November 1951):1129-1137 and V. T. Jordahl, "Missionaries in Uniform," Lutheran Herald 37 (23 April 1953):406.

<sup>3</sup>For example: Milton Nesvig, "Palm Sunday Reverie," Lutheran Herald 36 (13 May 1952):459-461; Viggo O. Aronson, "A Chaplain Reports to His Church," Lutheran Herald 37 (9 September 1952): 813-814; Walter H. Nordby, "Up Front in Korea," Lutheran Herald 37 (2 June 1953):523-524.

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Department of Defense, Bureau of Naval Personnel, History of the Chaplain Corps, United States Navy, by Clifford Drury, Paul S. Sanders and Ivan Hog (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1949), 6:173.



World War II days. . . . The men live in sand bagged bunkers; two three and four to a bunker.<sup>1</sup>

Chaplains from World War I would have had little difficulty in recognizing the situation; it was much the same sort of thing they had endured.

Nordby went on:

"The chaplain finds that his congregation on the line does not lead a safe and comfortable life. These men are harassed by rats and insects to say nothing of mud or the reddish colored Korean dirt. In spite of this the morale of the troops on the front lines is the best in the service. It is here that one enjoys that peculiar feeling only experienced, unfortunately on the field of battle; the feeling that everyone is concerned with taking care of the other person. . . . Marines will not be stopped from going out under fire to get a buddy. None complain if they have to carry a friend a great distance to the forward aid bunker."<sup>2</sup>

Chaplain O. Ingvoldstad became one of the most distinguished chaplains of the ELC in the Korean conflict. He received the Legion of Merit for his work during the period 28 November to 10 December 1950. His citation read in part:

Untiring in his efforts to be of service to the men in his regiment, Lieutenant-Commander Ingvoldstad frequently exposed himself to accurate enemy small-arms and machine gun fire in the field to comfort and cheer the troops, administer first aid to the wounded, and assist in evacuating casualties. He directly contributed to the saving of the lives of many wounded. His constant contributions in feeding wounded, shifting wounded to motor vehicle hoods to keep the badly hit from freezing to death, patrolling the column to assist corpsmen in administering first aid all contributed immeasurably in saving some 1,200 wounded. His fortitude, professional integrity and courageous conduct throughout the war were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 171

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 44.



"Orly," as Ingvoldstad was known to his friends, in latter years became a sort of second Storaasli in terms of the esteem in which he was held and in terms of the contributions he made to the church. But he was an active duty Navy chaplain until after the merger of the ELC into the new American Lutheran Church 1 January 1961.

#### Storaasli's Concerns

In 1951 Storaasli wrote Aasgaard saying that he felt that the church's chaplains were, all things considered, doing a wonderful job. And then he added:

I still wish that most of them would be a little more Lutheran in their practice, especially where it concerns the practice of Holy Communion. But I can only suggest, I cannot command, and so at times<sup>1</sup> I feel a little frustrated but that cannot be helped.<sup>1</sup>

That fall Storaasli gave the BSMP his thoughts on the problem of procuring an adequate number of chaplains. He said that:

So long as our country feels compelled to spend billions annually on Military Defense, material and personnel, our Churches are going to be plagued with a chaplain procurement problem. Deplore as they may the causes which give rise to the need for chaplains in the Armed Forces, the need is there and from all appearances it will continue for many years to come, with or without a World War III.<sup>2</sup>

He knew from his own experience of three years' work as executive secretary of the BSMP that the more the need for

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<sup>1</sup>Gynther Storaasli to J. A. Aasgaard, 22 March 1951, J. A. Aasgaard file, Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 11 October 1951, Archives of CL.



chaplains increased the more difficult it was to obtain them. He felt that there were three main causes for the current failure of the procurement program of the BSMP. They were: the current shortage of pastors, the failure of the Churches to make provision whereby an interested and qualified chaplain candidate could be called to serve as a chaplain, and the economic problem.

Storaasli felt that because Synod, District and Conference presidents were themselves faced with the problem of pulpit supply and demand, they let their own needs overshadow the needs of the Military Chaplaincy. And he felt that congregations did not want their pastors to leave, that if they did let them go they would have little or no assurance of when they might secure a successor.

Storaasli had great respect for those who felt that God called men to the ministry. So he said,

". . . many young pastors otherwise deeply interested in the spiritual ministry of the Chaplaincy hesitate to volunteer or to make application of their own accord on the ground that it might not be in accordance with God's will. Your Secretary has great sympathy for these interested young pastors. When they have sought his advice he has counseled them not to apply unless they are assured that it is God's will that they do so, and then he suggests to them to do the thing they for conscience sake dare refuse to do. If the Church could somehow issue a call to these interested young pastors, it would go a long way to solve their problem.<sup>1</sup>

So far as economics were concerned, Storaasli felt that the greatest problem lay in finding suitable housing at reasonable cost. He knew that rentals adjacent to military installations

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.



were not only excessively high, but suitable housing was almost impossible to be found.

In order to meet the problem caused by the above factors, Storaasli thought that there could be only one real solution to the situation. He proposed that the Chaplain Procurement Program of the BSMP be concentrated on seminarians. He gave the following reasons in support of his proposal:

1. District and Synod presidents as well as local congregations could place no stumbling blocks in the way.
2. Seminarians volunteering for the chaplain ministry could be called to this field of service and ordained on the strength of the call.
3. The economic problem now confronting the young married pastor would not be so acute.
4. Service regulations no longer require that a chaplain candidate must have a definite period of pastoral experience before being eligible to apply.
5. It is recognized that recruitment of seminarians for the chaplaincy who have had no definite period of pastoral experience is not generally approved by all our NLC Church bodies. But it is believed that were our emphasis to be placed upon seminarians to fill and maintain our chaplain quotas the objection could be overcome through some method of special pastoral training for these young chaplain candidates.<sup>1</sup>

Storaasli's proposal, but not all the reasons for it, was largely accepted by the BSMP. The following year he reported:

Eighteen seminarians were ordained on their call to the Chaplaincy from the 1952 graduating classes. Five seminarians were commissioned and appointed chaplains in the spring of 1951. All these young chaplains are veterans of World War II and have had little or no difficulty in adapting themselves to the chaplaincy. To date there has been no adverse criticism of these young chaplains because of their lack of pastoral experience. Your secretary's one fear is that these young chaplains may not find sufficient time for preparation of sermons. But since our younger pastors are not volunteering for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.



the chaplaincy in sufficient numbers seminarians appear to be our only hope in filling our chaplain quota.<sup>1</sup>

Even so the need continued to be great. And by this time the military services held Lutheran chaplains in high esteem. As Storaasli reported in 1952:

All three branches of the Military Chaplaincy are in need of more chaplains. But of the three, the need for chaplains in the Army is bordering on the critical stage. Your secretary has been asked repeatedly if NLC cannot supply more chaplains. An article on this subject was recently prepared by your secretary and mailed to the editors of our church publications with the request that it be given publicity. Copies of this article were mailed to all church presidents informing them of the above action and expressing the hope that they would have no objection to its publication. At no time in the past three years have candidates for the chaplaincy been so few in number. This situation at a time when the work of chaplains is recognized and appreciated by the military as never before is regrettable. But what makes this situation more regrettable as far as the Lutheran Church is concerned is the high esteem in which our Lutheran chaplains are held. The cry from the offices of the three Chiefs of Chaplains is the same: "Give us all the Lutheran Chaplains you can secure, we will take them all."<sup>2</sup>

At the time the ELC had seven men in the Army, thirteen in the Navy, and eight in the Air Force, for a total of twenty-eight, as compared with totals of 125 for the ULCA and forty for the ALC.<sup>3</sup>

Storaasli also reported that Spiritual Retreats for Lutheran chaplains had been planned for the coming year and would be held at a number of locations within the United States.<sup>4</sup> The holding of these Retreats was another indication that the Church

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<sup>1</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 28,29 October 1952, p. 4, Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



was beginning to look upon the chaplaincy as a life-time career for some of its pastors.

The holding of these retreats was significant in another way. For the first time, it provided a public forum in which the chaplains could voice to church representatives some of their concerns and desires which arose from their specialized area of ministry. And in Storaasli, they knew they had a listener who could fully understand what they were talking about.

Some of the suggestions from the retreats were:

That Synod, District or Conference presidents give the Military Chaplaincy a definite place and time on their Annual Convention Programs.

That efforts be made to encourage parish pastors to be more cooperative with chaplains who, prior to the performance of pastoral acts, write to them regarding congregational membership of military personnel receiving instruction for Baptism or Confirmation. That copies of Chaplains' Monthly Reports be forwarded to the District, Synod, Conference presidents of the respective reporting chaplains in order that the presidents might have first hand information about their chaplains' activities.<sup>1</sup>

Those were concerns generally from all the Retreats.

From the Spiritual Retreat in Berlin came the suggestions:

That NLC send church leaders of Synod, District, Conference level to (Europe) to visit and study at first hand the work of NLC chaplains on duty there;

and

That the Bureau Committee spell out what constitutes a Lutheran Communion Service in the Armed Forces and how they are to be conducted with reference to announcements, liturgy and worthiness of non-Lutheran guests.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 16 March 1953, Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



The chaplains said that they were interested in developing uniformity in practice among NLC chaplains. It is interesting to speculate, but cannot be proved, how much influence chaplains have had on the movements toward merger among Lutherans in the United States. The same could be said for the Ecumenical Movement.

Men attending the Washington Retreat suggested that the feasibility of arranging and using a liturgical communion service which would be uniform among all Lutheran chaplains be explored.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the concerns of the chaplains would be dealt with later that same year.

In the meantime Storaasli reported that he had visited some seminary campuses. On 3 March 1953 he had been at the ELC school, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minnesota.<sup>2</sup> This may have been the first of many such visits he was to make for the purpose of presenting the needs of the military chaplaincy.

For the first time since the BSMP was established in 1948, in September 1953 it was informed that it should curtail temporarily the procurement of chaplains for active duty. But the Navy was still looking for men. The establishment of a truce for the armies in Korea was the major reason. But, as Storaasli explained:

The primary reason for curtailment is not a surplus of chaplains, but a lack of funds and a consequent cut imposed upon the authorized chaplain strength because of the cut in the military budget voted by Congress. When Congress cut the military budget it also lowered the manpower ceiling. Each of the three branches of the Armed

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 5.



Forces are faced with the problem of separating involuntarily thousands of officers to meet their cuts in budgets and manpower. The chaplains branches, although chaplains are still needed, did not escape their cut in personnel. It is anticipated that the chaplain procurement program will swing into high gear after January 1954 since history always has a way of repeating itself. Hence applicants for the Air Force and Army Chaplaincies are advised to complete their applications for appointment and to anticipate calls to Active Duty after 1 January 1954. So while procurement of chaplains is currently curtailed the Bureau believes it wise to continue to process applications for ecclesiastical indorsements so as to be able to meet the anticipated demands for more chaplains after 1 January.<sup>1</sup>

Such swings in the policies of the military must have been made more difficult the dealings of the BSMP with the churches. And those swings in policy may help to explain why it was so hard to recruit chaplains for the Korean conflict and why so few veterans returned to duty. Those men who were not in the Reserves and hence involuntarily called up may have stayed out because of their memories of what had happened after World War II. Then too, during the war years, there had been a great plea for chaplains. But as soon as the war had ended, the need had evaporated by dictate of congress, and many men who might have wanted to remain on duty could not. They could scarcely be blamed for wanting to avoid a repetition of that trauma.

Storaasli was greatly concerned about the varying practices of the NLC chaplains with respect to their administration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion. In particular, he had discovered that there was quite a divergence of opinion and

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<sup>1</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 24 September 1953, p. 4, Archives of CL.



practice in the manner of conducting Holy Communion when non-Lutherans were admitted to the Lord's Table.

In order to avoid giving offense to non-Lutherans, many NLC chaplains were using the excuse of the exigencies of the military to greatly modify the services. They had adapted their practices to meet what they thought or claimed were peculiar local situations. But the result, Storaasli felt, was that many chaplains had so far departed from the established form of the Lutheran Communion Service that it had lost many if not most of the earmarks which normally characterize a Lutheran service.

Storaasli was convinced that was especially true of the preparatory portion of the service.

He had discovered that many chaplains were content to merely announce that anyone who believed in Jesus Christ was invited to the Lord's Table. Other chaplains omitted any reference at all to what constituted "worthiness" of a communion guest and distributed the elements to all comers regardless of their "beliefs" or church affiliation. Some announced that the communion service would be celebrated according to the rites and practices of the Lutheran Church, while others using the Lutheran Order of Service made no mention of the Lutheran Church. Some used the complete Preparatory Service as practiced by their respective church bodies, while others used an abbreviated form of service.

The only practice which Storaasli found to be common among the chaplains was the use of the Words of Institution while consecrating the elements. Even in the mode of distribution he



found a lack of uniformity. But this did not disturb him very much, since he felt that the mode of distribution whether by intinction or separately was considered a matter of church regulation or discipline.

Storaasli felt that affairs could be set in order if the Bureau would make certain recommendations to the chaplains. His suggestions, which he thought the Bureau should adopt, were that when a chaplain conducted a communion service in the armed forces, he should proceed as follows:

1. Celebrant preparatory to the Communion Service proper should announce his Church Affiliation and state that the communion service will be celebrated according to the rites and practices of the Lutheran Church.
2. Celebrant should make clear to prospective communion guests the faith and life requirements which the Lutheran Church deems essential in order to be a worthy guest:
  - a. The Guest must be baptized.
  - b. The Guest must be truly repentant.
  - c. The Guest must believe in Jesus Christ as his Personal Savior.
  - d. The Guest must believe in the Real Presence.
  - e. The Guest must have determination to amend his sinful ways.
3. To assure himself of the worthiness of the guests the celebrant should invariably use a Service of Preparation, the long or short form, commonly used in the Lutheran Church.<sup>1</sup>

In order that these proposals be implemented, Storaasli suggested that the Bureau print and distribute to chaplains an Order of Service for Holy Communion in folder form with a notation that it was the Order of Service suggested for use by the NLC chaplains. He felt that doing so ". . . would not only tend to stabilize uniformity among our chaplains, but perhaps, as important, would impress upon the participants the sacred solemnity

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 6-8.



with which the Lutheran Church regards the Sacrament of the Altar."<sup>1</sup>

The BSMP received Storaasli's suggestion favorably and recommended ". . . that a complete order for Holy Communion be printed in folder form with the suggestion that it be the form used by NLC chaplains in the Armed Forces."<sup>2</sup>

That recommendation might have seemed to have ended the matter; but in fact it did not. Judging by latter reactions by Storaasli, there continued to be a great deal of variation in how NLC chaplains administered communion and what they thought constituted a Lutheran Communion Service. This issue, highlighted by the recommendations of the chaplains, became one of the main concerns of Storaasli in his remaining active years of service to the church.

The issue is really a fundamental one, because it strikes at the heart of how a Lutheran chaplain should conceive of his ministry and of how the church understands its beliefs concerning the Sacrament. Is the chaplain to be a conserver of given stances, and does he limit his ministry to those who can accept his stance, or is the chaplain an innovator for the church, given great freedom in seeking to minister to all sorts and conditions of men? To this day the issue has not been resolved, and Storaasli's concern that Lutheran chaplains faithfully administer the Sacrament of Communion according to the practices of the Lutheran Church is still well founded.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Storaasli may well have had in mind the words of the Letter of Call which the ELC sent to men being called to be chaplains:

The Church requires that the chaplain shall be a member of the clergy of The Evangelical Lutheran Church and that in the public worship and all ministerial and sacred acts the chaplain shall use the Rituals and Order of Service approved by The Evangelical Lutheran Church, with such modifications as are required and necessary in service to the armed forces of our country.<sup>1</sup>

The question, of course, is, "What are the modifications that are required and necessary?"

#### Military Chaplaincy Commission

Early in 1952 the Church Council of the ELC received a petition from a group of seminary seniors that was to bring about a fundamental change in the church's way of dealing with its chaplains. The seniors requested that a committee or board be formed which would have the function of calling pastors and seminarians to the Military Chaplaincy. The seminarians gave the following reasons for such a request:

1. The present Military expansion demands an increase in the services of Chaplains.
2. Our Church has a definite obligation to serve those who are in the military service and this obligation is not being met adequately.
3. Under the existing policies of our Church, men often feel that they are calling themselves into the Chaplaincy. A Call should come from the Church because at present there is doubt in many minds as to whether or not this desire to serve in the Chaplaincy is a valid call.
4. Because there has been no letter of Call from the Church, men who may have a definite confrontation with the need for Chaplains begin to doubt the validity of this confrontation, especially when they receive a Call

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<sup>1</sup> See sample "Letter of Call" of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, dated 22 February 1952, in files of the MCC - located in the Archives of the ELC.



from a congregation. Thus some men who should go into the Chaplaincy may not do so. A letter of Call from the Church would help dispel such unwarranted doubt.<sup>1</sup>

Seven seniors had signed the Petition. All but one of them would later become chaplains. At least some of them had seen service in the Armed Forces in World War II.

One wonders how much Storaasli had to do with the formation and presentation of the Petition. In many ways it certainly reflected his concern. Perhaps it was some of these men he had had in mind when he had spoken about the matter of the Call to the BSMP in October 1951. (See Storaasli's discussion as quoted on page 100 above.)

The Church Council was certainly responsive to the seniors' Petition. At their meeting 22 February 1952 they approved a Resolution embodying the gist of the seminaries Petition. The Resolution required the Church Council to select from its midst:

". . . a Committee charged with the responsibility of interviewing men interested in this service (the chaplaincy) and issuing Calls in the name of The Evangelical Lutheran Church to those they deem fitted and Called of God into the Chaplaincy.<sup>2</sup>

The Committee as chosen consisted at first of Dr. V. T. Jordahl, chairman; Dr. Martin Anderson, and Dr. L. A. Pierson. Jordahl had been a chaplain in the Army during World War II; Pierson had been an enlisted soldier in World War I.

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<sup>1</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (1) (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting, 22 February, 1952)," Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (2) (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting, 22 February 1952)," Archives of the ELC.



The same day the Church Council recommended the establishment of the Committee it drew up a sample Letter of Call for men it wanted for the chaplaincy. The Letter was to be issued on behalf of the Church Council and to be signed by both the President and the Secretary of the ELC.

The Recommendation of the Church Council was accepted by the Convention of the ELC meeting in June 1952. The ELC further Resolved "That pastors give serious consideration to the possibility of making the chaplaincy their life's calling."<sup>1</sup> In adopting and modifying the recommendations of the Church Council, the Convention resolved, in part:

WHEREAS, Our Church does not have an adequate program for calling men into the chaplaincy of the Armed Forces or the Veterans Hospitals, and

WHEREAS, The Military Chaplain has an ambiguous standing in the Church and there is a definite need for establishing a closer relationship between the chaplain and his church from the time of entrance into service until his return to the parish ministry, and

WHEREAS, The Bureau of Service to Military Chaplains under the National Lutheran Council is desirous that our Lutheran bodies formulate and establish a policy for calling chaplains.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Military Chaplains committee of the Church Council of The Evangelical Lutheran Church be made a permanent committee to be known as the Military Chaplaincy Commission, whose function shall be to procure chaplains for the Armed Forces and the Veterans Hospitals according to the current needs of the service, to maintain contact with and to assist such chaplains during their period of duty, and to help such chaplains return to the parish ministry or allied work when their period of duty is completed; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That said commission be authorized to issue all calls to the military chaplaincy and to establish the necessary relationship with the

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<sup>1</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Resolutions - Church Convention - (1952) Part I," MCC - Archives of the ELC.



proper governmental authorities in coordination with the agencies of the National Lutheran Council to provide the necessary staff that these responsible ministries may be carried out.<sup>1</sup>

The establishment of the Military Chaplaincy Commission (MCC) by the church was the single most important step taken by the NLCA/ELC in its relations with its chaplains and the military establishment. By the establishment of the MCC the ELC had decisively moved from a posture of responding on a "one-time" basis to the needs of the chaplains in a particular crisis situation to a continuing involvement in the armed services of the United States. Certainly many different people were responsible for the church taking such an important and historic step.

Chaplain Storaasli's influence must have been considerable; but likewise many pastors who had been former chaplains must have played an important role. And veterans, lay and clergy alike, had some influence too. But most remarkable of all is that it was a small group of senior seminarians whose Petition prodded the ELC to take this step. Not to be forgotten or overlooked is the influence of Malmin. As editor of the church's paper, he had been responsible for publicizing much of the work and need of chaplains both in World War II and in Korea.

Malmin for one felt that the establishment of the MCC met a real need in the ELC. In January 1953 he commented on a visit he had had with a chaplain who at the time was unaware of

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<sup>1</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Resolutions - Church Convention - (1952) Part II," MCC - Archives of the ELC.



the existence of the MCC:

Some plain words were also spoken regarding the relation between the chaplain and his Church. Here we believe we remember his exact words: "For all my Church seems to care, I might as well be a Pentecostal, a Presbyterian, or what have you." His complaint is that there seems to be no one in the Church who is directly responsible for the welfare of the chaplain. He said that in the time since he was recalled into the service, he has not received a single letter from anyone in authority in his Church. As for the office of the National Lutheran Council which has to do with such things, the connection is at best tenuous and formal, having to do chiefly with "reports" and paper work.

Here the chaplain touches upon a point which has long been a matter of concern to not a few. Nor if it comes to that, is the complaint confined to men who enter the military chaplaincy. To a greater or less degree it applies to all pastors of the Church who are called into some specialized ministry of the Church who are not directly under the supervision of the ELC. But it is most serious for the chaplain, who needs so sorely to have an intimate connection with his church, his fellow pastors, and his synodical superiors.<sup>1</sup>

One month later, February 1953, the Church Council, by recommendation of the MCC, gave Aasgaard the authority to call Storaasli to be the Director of the MCC. Storaasli was nearing the mandatory retirement age of 65 for members of the staff of the NLC. The Letter of Call was dated 20 March 1953, and among other things specified that the Director:

1. Shall be in charge of the chaplain procurement program of the Church.
2. Shall endeavor to foster in the congregations of the Church greater interest in and support of the military chaplaincy.
3. Shall present the cause of the chaplaincy to conventions, district, and circuit meetings, as well as to auxiliary organizations and related agencies of the Church.
4. Shall serve as liaison between seminary students and faculty in the interest of the chaplaincy.

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<sup>1</sup>"Plain Words from a Chaplain" Lutheran Herald 37 (20 January 1953):59.



5. Shall as far as it is feasible and possible, maintain contact with chaplains on extended active duty through visits to military posts, camps and stations at home and abroad, for the purpose of lending encouragement and inspiration to them.<sup>1</sup>

At last the church was really making a full and complete effort at supporting its chaplains and maintaining interest in and contact with them, as well as seeking new men for the chaplaincy.

At the same meeting in February the Church Council discussed the question of where men going into the Chaplaincy should be ordained. The Council decided that the previous practice of the president of the Church ordaining the chaplains at a service at Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis should be maintained. They felt such a service was a witness to the Church and to the public. Indeed, during World War II several such ordination services had been pictured on the front page of the Lutheran Herald. But Council did recommend, ". . . that the home congregations of the men who will serve as military chaplains arrange a special recognition service honoring these men."<sup>2</sup>

In his "Annual Message to the Church" Aasgaard in the summer of 1953 announced that with the approval of the Church Council the Commission had issued a call to Storaasli to become the Director of the MCC.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"The Military Chaplaincy Commission," Report with penciled date of June 1954, Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting 27 February 1953)," Archives of the ELC.

<sup>3</sup>"Excerpt for President's Annual Message to Church - (1953) The Military Chaplaincy," Archives of the ELC.



Perhaps by having the MCC instead of himself issue the call, as had been originally by the Church Council, Aasgaard wanted to emphasize the important place the MCC held in the church's structure.

The 18 August 1953 issue of the Lutheran Herald, in an article entitled "ELC Chaplaincy Commission," announced that Storaasli had accepted the call. The article also revealed that in 1948 he had been granted the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Luther College, from which school he had graduated in 1911.<sup>1</sup>

At its 18 February 1954 meeting the Church Council adopted a resolution of support for Storaasli and the MCC. The Council urged pastors, members and congregational auxiliary organizations to maintain every contact possible with the people in the military services and their chaplains and it asked the Church, both corporately and as individual members, to give the people in the services the sustaining power of their combined prayers. What a change and contrast this must have been for Storaasli, who for so many years had been the church's lone and forgotten chaplain! The Council also resolved:

Whereas, the Evangelical Lutheran Church is represented in the military services of our country with a growing group of well trained, consecrated and zealous military chaplains; and

Whereas, our military chaplains have unselfishly, fearlessly and heroically, without thought of reward, faced hardship, sufferings and the danger of violent death in order to bring the strengthening and comforting message of the Prince of Peace to the armed forces on land, sea and air, at home and abroad;

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<sup>1</sup>Lutheran Herald 37 (18 August 1953):748.



therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that we give God thanks for His great work through these servants of His; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Church sustain them by deed and prayer and that it provide every facility for rehabilitation upon the return of these chaplains and their wives and families to civilian life.<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after beginning his work as director of the MCC, Storaasli sent a memo to all ELC chaplains on active duty. After introducing himself and his new office, he discussed the relationship between the MCC of the ELC and the BSMP of the NLC:

The establishment of this office no wise alters your relationship to the Bureau of Service. This office is not a substitute for that of the Bureau of Service. In relation to you as an ELC chaplain this office will serve as a Clearing House for any particular problems you may have as a member of the ELC which you feel should be submitted to it before submitting it to the Bureau of Service, and as an Information Center for any information you desire pertaining to your church, or other agencies thereof.

You, as chaplain, and I, as Director, will need to watch our step lest you on the one hand fall into the error of confusing this office, its duties and functions with those of the Bureau of Service, and I on the other hand commit the error of usurping the perogatives which rightfully belong to the Bureau.<sup>2</sup>

In the same memo Storaasli announced that the new secretary of the BSMP would be Chaplain Engebret O. Midboe.<sup>3</sup> Midboe, an ELC pastor, had served as an Army chaplain both during a part of World War II, seeing duty from 1945-1946, and also during the Korean affair, serving from 1951 to 1954.

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<sup>1</sup>"Resolutions Relative to the Military Chaplaincy Commission, Church Council," 18 February 1954, MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Director, Military Chaplaincy Commission, to All ELC Chaplains on Extended Active Duty, May 1954, MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Although at the beginning the relationship between Storaasli and Midboe may have been quite agreeable, it was to become quite tense before Storaasli retired at the end of 1960.

It was remarkable that in choosing Midboe to head the BSMP the NLC had chosen another ELC man. For the fourth time in thirty-seven years the NLC had chosen an ELC person to mediate the relationship between the member churches of the NLC and the military. First Larsen had done so in World War I days; then just before, during and for a short while after World War II Ylvisaker had had the job; Storaasli had been in the position from the formation of the BSMP until a year after the ELC had established its own Commission, and now Midboe was to take over the work in the BSMP.

Also worthy of note is that over the years the NLCA/ELC had greatly expanded its own means of dealing with the chaplains and the military. With Storaasli as the director of its own MCC the ELC had a man who possibly knew more than anyone else in the church the inner workings both of the NLC and the military.

Not long after beginning his work in the MCC, Storaasli wrote a paper in which he included a report on the activities of one of the ELC's chaplains.

The number of opportunities presented our chaplains to make spiritual contributions will vary according to their duty assignments. Not all assignments offer equal opportunities. Much depends upon the nature and size of the military establishment and its particular mission. For example, one of our ELC chaplains is currently on duty at a training center where only the sky is the limit as far as opportunities are concerned and where human limitations only curtail the extent and scope of



his spiritual ministry. This chaplain in one month conducted 16 General Protestant Church Services and 8 special Lutheran Church Services. He had two Religious Instruction Classes with an attendance of 744; conducted 12 choir rehearsals; visited the hospital 4 times and the Guard House once; wrote 2 letters to congregations; 16 letters to next of kin; 47 letters to Lutheran personnel; made 2 regular pastoral calls and 9 pastoral calls of condolence; gave 8 Orientation Talks to Recruits; 17 Character Guidance Lectures; showed 8 religious films; conducted 1054 interviews with incoming and outgoing military personnel; 118 spiritual interviews; 58 marital; 26 welfare and 109 miscellaneous ones. Called on 7 civilian clergymen in the nearby city; visited 2 civilian churches; visited the local Lutheran Service Center twice; attended 14 staff meetings; attended 8 official base events and 5 social events. The total contacts made by this one chaplain with his personnel in a month was over 15,000. I might mention that 4 of his weekly Sunday services for the Lutheran personnel are held at the early hour of 7:00 in the morning. Since he began this early Lutheran Service his weekly attendance at the two Sunday Lutheran Services is around 550. The spiritual impact made by the church through this one chaplain's activities can only be conjectured. If the same opportunities were available to all the other ELC chaplains I do not doubt but with one or two exceptions they too would measure up to the spiritual challenge set before them.<sup>1</sup>

One may suspect that Storassli had much to do with an announcement that appeared in the church paper late in 1954. The English Lutheran Union Church of Stanton, North Dakota, by unanimous vote of the congregation, was sending \$350 of its mission festival offering to the ELC Military Chaplaincy Commission with the suggestion that it be used to set up a chaplain's library project.<sup>2</sup>

A less pleasant piece of business for the MCC that year came about when it had to withdraw the Ecclesiastical

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<sup>1</sup>Storaasli, "Spiritual Contribution," p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Lutheran Herald 38 (2 November 1954):1012.



Indorsement of a chaplain. The MCC met with him, but after much counseling, found that he no longer held the doctrinal position of the Lutheran Church on the Lord's Supper. The chaplain ". . . submitted his resignation from the Ministerium of ELC effective on the date of his final separation from the military service,"<sup>1</sup> which apparently took place the same year. So far as can be determined, that was the only instance of such a thing happening during the time Storaasli was director of the MCC. No doubt it strengthened Storaasli's resolve to insist that ELC chaplains hold to a proper Lutheran doctrine of and practice of administering the Sacrament of the Altar.

Thus, by the end of 1954, even though the tensions of the Korean War were subsiding slightly, the ELC had taken its biggest step in committing itself to an ongoing interest in the military affairs of the United States. The ELC had accepted the fact that the chaplaincy was a permanently needed institution and one worthy of and needing its support.

The support was not universal within the church and did not come all at once. During the first months of the MCC's existence, it must have seemed as though such support was very thin indeed.

But even so, as he examined the record of the MCC, Storaasli was not willing to abandon the fundamental principle he held concerning a man's call to the chaplaincy:

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes of the Military Chaplaincy Commission," 1954, p. 5, Archives of the ELC.



The underlying principle of our procurement program if we are to secure the best qualified and spiritually equipped candidates is predicated on the assumption that God, in the final analysis, must call the individual.

Unless a chaplain candidate is convinced in his heart that God wants him in the chaplaincy - we cannot urge him to come into the chaplaincy. When the Director's counsel and advice is sought by a candidate he has but one advice to give him: "Do the thing which he for conscience sake toward God dare not refuse to do."

Experience has proved again and again that the chaplain who does not possess this conviction of "being called by God", cannot endure to the full extent of his capacity the spiritual and mental hardships frequently encountered in the military chaplaincy.<sup>1</sup>

Succeeding years have proven in full measure the wisdom of Storaasli's advice and principle.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



## CHAPTER SIX

### COLD WAR - COLD PEACE (1955-1960)

Although people would later consider the years of the presidency of Eisenhower a time of prosperity and peace, in fact there were many "small" wars and near-wars. A truce had been obtained in Korea, but even so men continued to be killed and wounded there. The casualties came not from big battles, but from repeated truce violations. Even today it is not known to what extent American forces were already involved in Viet Nam. Although not directly involved in a military way, Americans were certainly affected by the abortive attempt of the British and French to seize the Suez Canal. And many Americans listened in agony as the Hungarians unsuccessfully sought to throw out their Russian oppressors.

In the last years of its existence, the ELC found itself relating to chaplains and the armed forces of the United States through two different groups - through its own Military Chaplaincy Commission, directed by Gynther Storaasli, and through the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel of the National Lutheran Council, whose executive secretary was Engebret Midboe. Both men were former chaplains; both were pastors of the ELC.

At the end of the era, as the ELC was planning for its



inclusion in the new American Lutheran Church, the president of the ELC raised the question of whether or not the new church would continue to need both groups. The answer he received was overwhelmingly in the affirmative. The work done by both had created justification for their continuance.

Therefore, in order to understand the era, it is necessary to consider separately the history of each agency, the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, and the Military Chaplaincy Commission.

#### Bureau of Service to Military Personnel

In the fall of 1955, Midboe announced to the BSMP that:

Procurement for the active duty Army and Navy Chaplaincy services has been virtually halted because of the shrinkage of the Army and the overage of Lutheran chaplains on Active Duty in the Navy. All calls to Extended Active Duty from these two services are being extended to pastors who have a Reserve Commission as a result of their acceptance thereof while in the Seminary programs. It is believed that this arrangement is ideal from the church's point of view, for it not only prepares them for both the civilian parish ministry and the military or naval chaplaincy, but also gives them a chance to serve in a parish as Reserve Forces chaplains before being called to Extended Active Duty.<sup>1</sup>

As it turned out at least for the ELC in the years of this era, 1955-1960, except for one year (1957) far more men entered the chaplaincy directly from the seminary than from the parish ministry (see Table 1).

Midboe went on to say regarding the Air Force, that

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<sup>1</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 11 October 1955, Archives of CL.



it, ". . . because of its current expansion, large number of younger Chaplains desiring separation, and the absence of a seminarian program, goes begging for Lutheran Chaplains."<sup>1</sup>

Midboe had spoken of the Reserves. This was to be a new and significant factor in the church's relationship with the military. After both World War I and World War II the Reserves for years had consisted primarily of veterans. It is true that in the years preceding World War II a number of men had joined the Reserves. But one suspects that in most cases then the motive had been economic, as the nation was in the throes of the Depression. Before 1940, and the establishment of national conscription, although a number of NLCA men had joined the Reserve Chaplaincy, very few had actually come on active duty.

But in 1955 Midboe saw a new situation arising:

Forseeing the advent of some type of Reserve Forces legislation at its March meeting, the Bureau Committee encouraged the Secretary to publicize the need for chaplains in the National Guard, the Army Reserves, the Air National Guard, the Navy Reserves, the Air Force Reserves and the Civil Air Patrol. Information concerning the current chaplain vacancies in these organizations was gathered and disseminated to the Church and Synod Presidents. A very favorable response to this part-time chaplaincy has been forthcoming.<sup>2</sup>

The churches from now on would increasingly be concerned in a two-fold way with the military and the chaplains. The one concern would be with active duty personnel and needs; the other concern would involve those who would continue their civilian pursuits but who would nevertheless be obligated to the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



military in some fashion. For many this would mean taking time off to attend a weekly or week-end drill and once a year leaving to go to a two-week military exercise. The really new factor would be that many of those in the reserves would never go on active duty. The military chaplaincy could now be looked on as a part-time job for civilian clergy.

In 1955 concerns were once again voiced about the status of chaplains at the service academies. At the Army's institution, West Point, for years civilian Episcopalian clergymen had officiated at services in the chapel and conducted the religious program. Other church bodies, including the Lutherans, had objected in the past to this practice, but to no avail. One solution proposed had been to have Active Duty Chaplains, not exclusively Episcopalian, on a regular basis, serve the Academy. But, the BSMP was told:

The present leadership at the Academy is not amendable to having Active Duty Chaplains assigned for administering the religious program.

The only solution to the problem is to alter basic legislation initiated during the last session of Congress, namely, to change the Chaplaincy from a purely "civilian" ministry to that of regularly commissioned Army Chaplains.

This bill never got beyond the Committee rooms this past session. The General Commission has taken an active interest in this case and has been promised to be alerted when it comes up for discussion.<sup>1</sup>

The same year, at the Navy's Academy, Annapolis, matters took a different twist. The Navy did have Active Duty Chaplains serving the Academy. But when a Methodist chaplain was to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



relieve the one there, who happened to be Episcopalian, he was informed that he could not conduct the worship services according to his Methodist usages, but would have to use the Episcopal liturgy. He thereupon turned down the orders. "To make a long story short, this matter was brought to the attention of Bishop Oxnam, the Chairman of the Methodist Commission on Chaplains, who is currently making overtures to Bureau of Naval Personnel to derive an explanation for the alleged flaunting of the principle of equal rights of religious denominations."<sup>1</sup> In this case Midboe suggested that the BSMP address a resolution to the General Commission, which had solicited its opinion and was considering the Annapolis matter. The form of the resolution which Midboe suggested was:

Believing as we do in the separation of Church and State and that every religious denomination has equal rights and privileges under the Constitution and the Laws of the United States, and, therefore, also within the Regulations of the Military Services of this country, the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel of the National Lutheran Council, hereby affirms its conviction that the assignment of Chaplains to the United States Naval Academy should be made without respect to denomination and without any restrictions on the form of worship to be followed.<sup>2</sup>

Midboe felt that it was absolutely essential that he or a representative of the BSMP make field visitations. Other denominations were doing so. But more importantly, the value of such trips, he maintained, is that it:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



- a. Gives each Chaplain an opportunity to contact his commander both in the preparation for the visit, during the visit, and sometimes following it.
- b. Gives the Secretary the opportunity to see where the Lutheran Chaplain is operating, what facilities are furnished him to carry out his program, what command backing and leadership is forthcoming, what guidance from supervisory chaplains is in evidence.
- c. Gives the Secretary the opportunity to gauge the rapport which the chaplain enjoys with his commander, his fellow-chaplains, his service congregation.<sup>1</sup>

And also late in 1955 the BSMP voted:

That a letter be directed from the Bureau to the Chief of the Bureau of Naval Personnel decrying the Chapel situation which exists at Kaneohe Marine Base, T. H., and encouraging the practice of giving Chaplains at every echelon a place on planning boards when the building of Naval and Marine Installations are contemplated.<sup>2</sup>

Thus it can be seen that by the end of 1955 the BSMP had concerned itself about matters ranging from the assignment and duties of chaplains at the service academies to the construction of chapels on military installations.

A year later the BSMP heard that an apparently harmonious resolution had been given to the Annapolis matter, and that recently assigned chaplains to that academy were of the Congregational Christian and Presbyterian churches.<sup>3</sup>

The Reserve program had become more important. Even though the Air Force would not accept a man directly into Active Duty - he had to wait in the Reserves until a denominational quota became available for him - the BSMP did not want to give the impression that no chaplains were needed for active duty.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 2 October 1956, Archives of CL.



If the door has been slammed completely shut, it is one of the most difficult hurdles to overcome when the requirements pile up. Word gets around and it takes about a year to build up a consciousness of the need in the minds of the pastors at large.<sup>1</sup>

As for the chaplains who were on active duty, Midboe felt that one of the biggest problems for them, and especially for those who had to move often and who were limited in the amount of materials that they could take with them was that of ". . . keeping informed and edified by way of good reading."<sup>2</sup> Midboe was thinking of following the example of some other Protestant denominations. He was considering the possibility of supplying books ". . . on a weekly or bi-weekly basis to all our chaplains throughout the world."<sup>3</sup>

Storaasli heard of this idea and acted on it. As long as he was the head of the MCC, he sent out a book each month to all active duty ELC chaplains.

The question of how to report pastoral acts was becoming a more urgent one. Midboe and the chaplains were coming more and more to realize that there were a large number of service families who had become completely cut off from any civilian denomination. Since they had no home except in the military, there was no denomination to which pastoral acts done for them could be reported. Some of the chaplains attempted to solve this problem by sending all their pastoral acts of this nature to one church with whom they had made a special agreement in this regard. But if the pastor left, the chaplain, not knowing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



of the change, would continue sending the reports and problems would develop. In order to deal with the problems, Midboe suggested that:

. . . certain churches in each of the participating bodies be designated as repositories for these pastoral acts until such a time when a particular family desires to leave the service and to make application for membership in a local congregation at which time these pastoral acts could be withdrawn from the files of that church and transferred to the congregation of their choice.<sup>1</sup>

Thinking of the foregoing and of the need to keep chaplains and congregations in touch with each other and the pressures encountered by chaplains to forego their denominational identities, Midboe said:

When the chaplain comes to his first assignment he finds a chapel fully accoutered with all the appointments even to the communion service elements which have been paid for out of public funds. When he turns to the Hymnary he finds a book which has been planned, edited, and is in the process of being re-edited, by the Services themselves and paid for by public funds. When it comes to the form of worship there is a tremendous pressure towards a General Protestant Service almost to the exclusion of a denominational emphasis and the holding of denominational services. There is almost a pattern being established of a service for the Army, Navy or Air Force. When it comes to pastoral acts (as we have stated before), there is a growing number of people who do not want their names and their baptisms and confirmations referred to a civilian congregation, but prefer rather to have these acts inscribed in the local chapel. There have been chaplains who have been confronted with the idea and they have been told that they were not preaching according to the "Army, Navy, or Air Force Religion." For all practical purposes a service church is developing which is doing everything for itself except training and ordaining clergymen. From the point of view of some of the Churches this is regarded as a serious drift. From the above statements it appears that a greater emphasis should be given to attempt to keep the chaplains and service people in

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10.



touch with the congregations.<sup>1</sup>

To help meet the threat of a "service church" Midboe suggested that ". . . calls and visitations should be made at all bases whether there are Lutheran Chaplains assigned or not in order that we may let the Command and the Chaplain assigned become aware that we are concerned about Lutheran coverage and that if it appears necessary we might encourage an Auxiliary Chaplain status from some civilian pastorate in the nearby community."<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-fifties the BSMP began to prepare a manual for use by Lutheran chaplains. From time to time the BSMP was informed of its progress. For example, in April, 1958, ". . . the staff was asked to make further evaluation of the format and contents, to rewrite, and in unofficial consultation with the participating bodies to receive their reactions in order that a document might be presented at the Spring meeting."<sup>3</sup>

Word of Midboe's implied criticism of the military with respect to the danger of "service churches" had somehow become public knowledge and had elicited a strong reaction. A sub-committee of the BSMP subsequently had to prepare a defense of his statements and did so. The sub-committee's Statement ended by saying, in part:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 16 April 1958, p. 2, Archives of CL.



We affirm our conviction that the military chaplaincy is effective only when it safeguards the right of the individual chaplain to maintain his spiritual and confessional integrity and to minister faithfully according to the tenets of his church. We believe that this enhances rather than diminishes, his effectiveness in ministering to all who come under his spiritual care.<sup>1</sup>

In the summer of 1958 Midboe wrote, in a typical fashion, to a young Lutheran attending the Army's Chaplain School:

". . . the military chaplaincy can be one of the most lonely and frustrating ministeries. If the chaplain sits around waiting for the people to come to him he will likely be sadly disillusioned. On the other hand, he can become so busy with a hundred little details which may make little difference as far as the Kingdom is concerned - . . . .

Somewhere between these extremes is an honest, dedicated, service where it dares to cut mercilessly through the maze of non-essential trivia and sees in clear focus the Lord's business in direct contact with sinful human beings who need to hear the good news of a loving heavenly Father's personal concern for them for time and eternity.<sup>2</sup>

The next year Midboe urged the same man:

If you ever have opportunity during your travels to visit places where the Church is at work, please let us have a story with pictures, if possible. Publicity of this kind ties the work of the Chaplain intimately with the on-going work of the Church and shows in a very dramatic way his broad concern for the welfare of all people everywhere.<sup>3</sup>

In 1958 chaplains attending a religious retreat in Kaiserslautern, Germany, recommended to the Armed Services

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., "Exhibit A, Statement Prepared by Bureau Subcommittee after Studying Reactions to the Bureau's Annual Report to the NLC," p. 4. Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Midboe to Blucher, 20 August 1958, D. P. Blucher file, DSMP - LUCUSA.

<sup>3</sup>Midboe to Blucher, 13 March 1959, D. P. Blucher file, DSMP - LUCUSA.



Commission, Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod, and the BSMP that the two groups study:

1. The establishment of Lutheran military parishes comprising the equivalent of a Lutheran military district, with such ecclesiastical enabling legislation as may be necessary to insure
  - a. The effective exercise of the dual Authority of the Keys among service-connected Lutherans.
  - b. The systematic referral of Lutheran candidates, catechumens, and faithful, with particular reference to oversea circumstances.
2. A common English text of the Lutheran symbols, hymnal, liturgy, lectionary and ritual.
3. A Lutheran concept of religious retreats for:
  - a. Lutheran pastors, with particular reference to Lutheran military chaplains.
  - b. Lutheran laymen, with particular reference to Service-connected Lutherans.
4. The furtherance of fraternal association on the part of Lutheran chaplains and families.<sup>1</sup>

During this era, especially nothing came of these proposals. But now, 1977, work on number 2 above has nearly been completed by the major Lutheran bodies in the United States. One wonders how much of that work came about because of just such proposals made by the chaplains. For some years past, number 3 above has been a reality in, at least, Europe, where Lutheran chaplains and service lay people have had a yearly Lutheran retreat. Proposal 1b has been worked at with varying degrees of success. Proposal 1a has been largely ignored and forgotten. Proposal 4 has often been a joyous reality, although highly dependent on individual personalities and circumstances.

In 1959, indicative of how thoroughly involved the church had become in the affairs of the military chaplaincy

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<sup>1</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council, Exhibit C," 30 September 1958, p. 4, Archives of CL.



program and the work of chaplains in military, it was announced to the BSMP that Dr. Richard Evenson, Executive Secretary for Parish Education of the ELC, had been nominated to the Department of Defense ". . . as a Lutheran Consultant on Religious School Curricula studying materials to be used in Religious schools in the Armed Forces."<sup>1</sup> He was accepted and became one of seven consultants who made a study of the materials available from all Protestant denominations in the United States for possible incorporation into the Unified Plan used in the Armed Forces. He participated in what is an annual event, whereby material from Protestant publishing concerns is considered every year on a continuing basis for use in the Armed Forces.

The matter of the Chaplains Manual came up again in 1960. By this time considerable controversy had arisen over several proposed features of it, particularly the section dealing with Communion practices. It was felt the matter needed further discussion:

Pastor David Granskou, Secretary of the Committee on Theological Cooperation, has been working with members of his Committee on a statement concerning Communion practices in the Armed Forces. Pastor Granskou will be at the Bureau Meeting to share with the Committee members the latest draft statement of the Committee . . . .

During conversations with reference to the manual and the statement on Communion practices, it was proposed by Dr. F. A. Schiotz, President of the Evangelical

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<sup>1</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 13 October, 1959, p. 8, Archives of CL.



Lutheran Church, that a joint meeting of all committees of the Participating Bodies of the National Lutheran Council be held to afford opportunity to air this whole matter fully.<sup>1</sup>

A joint Lutheran Lay and Chaplain Retreat was held for the first time at Berchtesgaden, Germany, May 16-20, 1960. Years before, in the late forties, Professor Howard Hong of St. Olaf College had held retreats for Displaced Persons at the same spot. It had become an Armed Forces Recreation Center, usable for all members of the United States Armed Forces in Europe and their dependents. Some of the facilities were those formerly used by Hitler and members of the Nazi party as a mountain retreat in the Bavarian Alps. In 1959 the Commander of NATO forces was General Lauris Norstad. He was the brother of F. M. Norstad, who had been an ELC Navy chaplain in World War II, and was also himself a member of the ELC. He was invited to come to the Retreat.<sup>2</sup>

By the end of the fifties member churches of the NLC were well advanced in the planning that would lead to the formation of two new large Lutheran church bodies - the new American Lutheran Church, formed in 1960 by the merger of the old American Lutheran Church, the United Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the ELC; and the Lutheran Church in America, formed in 1962 by the merger of the United Lutheran Church in America, the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the American

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<sup>1</sup>"Proposed Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 26 April 1960, p. 1, Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church. The only member churches of the NLC not included in these mergers were the Lutheran Free Church, which became a part of the ALC in 1963, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada, which became a separate body in 1966, but which had been a district of the old ELC.

The prospect of these mergers raised again the question of the necessity for the existence of the NLC. By this time it was not doubted that some sort of organization that would enable Lutherans to work together on projects of common interest was needed; what was questioned was what sort of shape such an organization should take. Thus the BSMP had to face the question of what sort of future it faced, and what would its recommendations be.

In defense of the need for its existence and indeed of the need for an upgrading in its status, the BSMP pointed out, in part, that

We are . . . here dealing with an agency which has a longer history of successful inter-Lutheran co-operation than any other. Its service, once thought of as an activity which could presently be discontinued, has remained as an obligation of the Participating Bodies to the present day. . . .

The necessity of almost daily contact on the part of the Church agencies with one or the other of the offices of the rapidly changing Armed Forces requires the maintenance of central offices closely related to them. . . .

The anticipation once held that the work of the Bureau might prove to be only temporary has entirely disappeared. Two and one half million men (and women) are still in uniforms. An additional one million of their dependents still live on or near military installations in the United States and many foreign countries.



The Bureau is related to a world-wide ministry performed by two hundred and twenty active-duty chaplains, . . . .<sup>1</sup>

Conscious that its own history needed to be written, in 1960 the BSMP asked Storaasli to do the job. He replied that he did not feel capable for such a task, but suggested as sources precisely those materials used in this thesis. He also indicated that he was compiling such materials for the MCC.<sup>2</sup>

In 1960 the matter of providing a satisfactory religious program at West Point was still not settled. Several approaches were being made to the authorities to change the direction and operation of the program. One attempt was being made to bring the program under the supervision of the Chief of Chaplains; the other was an attempt to make it possible for Lutheran Cadets to attend a church of their choice in lieu of the general service at the Academy. The approaches were being made, among others, by the General Commission on Chaplains, by the conversations being carried on by the President of the National Lutheran Council and by Midboe to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army.<sup>3</sup> In latter years the matter finally wound up on the courts. The Lutheran churches were successful parties to a suit that sought to eliminate compulsory chapel attendance at

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<sup>1</sup>"Report of the Special Committee on Preliminary Study of the Operations and Organization of the NLC, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel," Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>"Agenda, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council, Exhibit II, Excerpts from Chaplain Storaasli's Letter," 4 October 1960, Archives of CL.

<sup>3</sup>"Minutes, Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council," 4 October 1960, p. 13, Archives of CL.



the service academies.

As this era drew to a close, the BSMP was facing a challenge to its continued existence, yet was able to point to a continually growing and significant involvement in the affairs of the military, particularly relating to chaplains, on behalf of the churches. It had also been one of the primary means by which the chaplains had related to the churches and by which the churches had become aware of the needs of the chaplains and those who served in the armed forces of the United States.

#### Military Chaplains Commission

In 1955 Storaasli began his first full year of service as Director of the Military Chaplains Commission of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Early that year a complaint had come to him concerning the kinds of questions that were being asked of seminarians applying for admission into the Navy's Ensign Probationary Chaplain. Evidently seminarians interested in the Navy's program had been interviewed by a Reserve Chaplain who had asked them what their attitude would be toward administering Holy Communion to non-Lutheran personnel and whether they would use wine or grape juice in their communion services. The candidates had been left with the impression that a firm stand in denominational convictions and practices might be detrimental to favorable action on their application.



Storaasli had objected vigorously to the Navy. Shortly thereafter the Navy's Chief of Chaplains, RADM E. B. Harp, wrote to CAPT M. H. Twitchell, who was the active duty chaplain responsible for such interviews in the area, and repeated the Navy's policy on the matter:

As you know, the policy of the Corps and the official regulation of the Navy require that a chaplain uphold the tenets and practice of his Church. Any impression to the contrary is not in the best interest of the Navy and our Corps.

You therefore are requested to instruct all chaplains whose services are utilized in interviewing applicants for either the Ensign Probationary Program or the Chaplaincy that they inform the applicants of the Navy's official and positive stand in this matter. It is recognized that it may be desirable for the purposes of obtaining reactions or evaluating such qualities as zeal, judgment and conviction to question an applicant in the area of his religious practices. Great care must be exercised, however, not to offend or give the impression that his convictions will not enjoy the wholehearted respect of the service and the Corps, and that he will not be permitted the freedom of conscience in his pastoral functions guaranteed unto him by governing regulations. Some words of assurance in this area may well be in order on the occasion of each interview, particularly to those candidates professing positive and definite convictions.<sup>1</sup>

And, Chaplain Harp added:

We are not in a position to correct the false impressions already given, but by copy of this letter we shall reassure the responsible officials of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Navy's firm stand in this matter.<sup>2</sup>

In tightening the ELC's procedures, Storaasli requested that students who had calls to the Chaplaincy be given no other

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<sup>1</sup>"RADM E. B. Harp to CAPT M. H. Twitchell, 27 January 1955, MCC - Archives of CL.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



Calls until they had decided on the Chaplaincy Call.<sup>1</sup>

Early in 1956 Storaasli solicited the opinion of Schiotz of what he thought the chaplain's relationship should be to his church body. Taking his cues from what Schiotz wrote in response and from his own long experience, both as an active duty chaplain and as a denominational official concerned with such matters, Storaasli wrote and delivered a long paper on the subject. (See Appendix) While he was emphatic in his insistence that Lutheran chaplains were to maintain their Lutheran identity both in word and deed, he was aware of the other side of the issue. He addressed what he called a "Pastoral Letter" to all ELC active duty chaplains, in which he stressed the point that "It is the primary duty of each chaplain, so far as it is practicable, to serve the religious and moral needs of the entire personnel of the command to which he is assigned."<sup>2</sup> (Underlining in original)

Storaasli in his report of his work during 1955 spoke of what he thought of the capabilities of the seminarians who were going directly into the chaplaincy:

The Director wishes to go on record that he has only words of praise for the chaplain who entered the chaplaincy direct from the Seminary and makes no

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<sup>1</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (3) (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting, 23 February 1955)," MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>"Pastoral Letter," 14 June 1956, MCC - Archives of the ELC.



apology for their pre-chaplaincy lack of pastoral experience. In his estimation they have been and are "tops."<sup>1</sup>

At present, 1977, the church requires chaplain candidates to have had a minimum of three years of pastoral experience before coming on active duty. This has been the policy of the church since at least the early sixties. But it needs to be borne in mind that in the fifties most of the men entering the chaplaincy were veterans of either World War II or Korea and therefore certainly had had prior military experience. The church felt that factor compensated for their lack of parish experience as pastors.

Showing how Schiotz supported Storaasli in his quest for chaplains is the fact that in 1956 District Presidents were sent a memo by the presidents of the church in which they were asked: "Will you prayerfully think through the roster of clergy in your district to see whether there may not be one or two or three names that you can send to Chaplain Storaasli as candidate material."<sup>2</sup>

The same year as Dr. Alvin Rogness, president of the seminary, met with the MCC, he voiced some unease about the fact that future pastors, without themselves having had military experience, would be ministering to congregations in which

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<sup>1</sup>"Annual Report", p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> "Memorandum to District Presidents from Fredrik A. Schiotz re chaplaincy needs," 2 September 1956, Fredrik A. Schiotz file, Archives of the ELC.



over seventy-five per cent of the men would have had such experience.<sup>1</sup> Rogness felt that, "No matter what the shortage is in the parish ministry, we must not fail to take advantage of our quotas so that we do not fail our servicemen and our church."<sup>2</sup>

Storaasli pointed out, in a discussion on the chaplaincy, that one of the difficulties in it was that supervisory chaplains sometimes do not have the right attitudes, but have too inflated an idea of themselves. He thought that many of the ELC chaplains were doing an excellent job. "Sometimes," he said, "they run into petty jealousies at a base where chaplains of other denominations are not able to draw as large a crowd as when they are preaching."<sup>3</sup>

Reacting to a proposal of the BSMP, in 1958 the MCC decided that the Commission on Evangelism of the ELC should be the repository for all Pastoral Acts performed by chaplains on active duty involving members of the ELC. But the MCC desired that the records should, if at all possible, be forwarded to a local congregation.<sup>4</sup>

The issue of a "service church," which Midboe felt was so grave, was not really handled by this action. Indeed, it is doubtful if the matter was really discussed in depth.

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<sup>1</sup>"Minutes, Meeting of Military Chaplaincy Commission, The Evangelical Lutheran Church," 12 December 1956, Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (3) (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting," 17 June 1958, Archives of the ELC.



Although the MCC had heard about the discussion involving compulsory chapel attendance at West Point, it nevertheless decided that no resolution should be drawn up regarding the matter.<sup>1</sup> This action reflected more a desire to keep an old custom than adherence to Lutheran principles. Usually Lutherans have not wanted to be bound to a legalistic understanding of sabbath observance. And neither have Lutheran traditionally liked the idea of having to worship in a prescribed way, particularly if that way itself be not explicitly Lutheran. Evidently in this case the MCC felt that Lutheran cadets should, like the rest, be compelled to attend a General Protestant Service, as they had always done, even though this was contrary to normal Lutheran practice.

The BSMP, in preparing its proposed Manual for Lutheran Chaplains, had considered making some policy changes with respect to the question of Holy Communion as it was to be administered and received in the Armed Forces. When Storaasli heard of the proposed changes, he did not like the idea at all. In a long letter to Midboe, he gave his reaction. He pointed out what he had discovered when he had first worked for the BSMP and what action he had taken in an attempt to correct the situation:

The then newly appointed Secretary of the Bureau of Service was not long in discovering that scarcely any two NLC military chaplains administered or celebrated Holy Communion in like manner. Each chaplain appeared to consider himself a "law unto himself" in

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<sup>1</sup>"Military Chaplaincy Commission (3) (From: Minutes of Church Council Meeting," 17 June 1958, Archives of the ELC.



this area - and did pretty much as he pleased. Many of them paying little or no heed to their own church body's or synod's policy or practice. It was this "confused state of affairs" in the celebration of Holy Communion within the NLC Military Chaplaincy which eventually prompted the publishing of a folder: "Order of Service for Holy Communion," and the memorandum in regard to this Communion folder, its availability to and use by NCL chaplains.<sup>1</sup>

He went on to say that

Acquainted as I am with the whole history of the "conflict" between many NLC chaplains and the sound Lutheran Communion practices in the Armed Forces; acquainted as I am personally with many of the individual NLC chaplains who ignored suggestions coming down from higher authority to be more Lutheran in their Holy Communion practices, I frequently got the impression that they wanted to be as little Lutheran as possible in their practices.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore Storaasli knew that something other than a change in the policy of the BSMP was needed:

Experience in the past has shown that unless procedures are spelled out in detail in the area of Holy Communion practices - the policies and practices of the respective general church bodies are dishonored by non-observance. It was not a change in the Holy Communion practices and procedures established by the Bureau which was and is needed - but a change of heart and attitude on the part of the chaplains toward the policies and practices of their general church bodies.<sup>3</sup>

And Storaasli stated what would be the position of the ELC on the question:

If the Manual is published and the Section on Holy Communion will appear therein as stipulated by the Committee's action, then it is only fair to let you know that as Director of the Military Chaplaincy Commission the ELC chaplains will be governed not only by that

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<sup>1</sup>Gynther Storaasli to Engebret O. Midboe, 27 January 1959, MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 4.



portion of the Section on Holy Communion - retained by the Committee but by that portion of the Section which was deleted. When the Manual for Lutheran Chaplains is published I shall inform our chaplains of the procedures to be followed in their ministration of Holy Communion where non-Lutheran guests are involved. I have Dr. Schiotz's concurrence in this matter.<sup>1</sup>

The MCC endorsed Storaasli's position by a resolution passed at its meeting 13 February 1959.<sup>2</sup>

The proposed manual was not published until after Storaasli had retired and the ELC had become a part of the new ALC.

Shortly after he had written to Midbøe, Storaasli submitted to Schiotz a working draft of "A Statement of Principles to Guide Pastors and Chaplains in Their Administration of Holy Communion." It is believed that this Statement was sent to all chaplains of the ELC. Among other things, the Statement said that

Although Lutheran churches must exercise care to withhold participation of the Sacrament of the Altar from those who reject Scriptural teachings regarding it, they must be equally careful not to deny such participation to any faithful member of Christ's church coming under its ministration and care. When a Christian devoutly believes His Lord's word of promise as conveyed through and in this Sacrament, he is a worthy guest at the Lord's Table. Membership in the organized church -- including the Lutheran church -- is a sign of, but never the prerequisite of, membership in the Una Sancta, to which the Sacrament of the Altar has been given by the Lord.<sup>3</sup>

Also in 1959 Storaasli drew up a questionnaire which he titled "Questions on Procedures of Interest to Chaplains." He

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>The Military Chaplaincy Commission to Executive Committee, National Lutheran Council; through Office, President, Evangelical Lutheran Church; through the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel, 13 February 1959, MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>3</sup>F. A. Schiotz file, MCC - Archives of the ELC.



posed hypothetical situations and asked what a Lutheran chaplain should do in each instance. The questionnaire was sent out to chaplains with a note asking for their written response. Many replied. Storaasli himself then wrote in his suggested answers and sent them to the chaplains with a memorandum which concluded by saying:

There is in the areas of our Chaplain's ministry indicated by the above QUESTIONNAIRE a personal obligation to God which cannot lightly be ignored or overlooked, namely, the obligation imposed upon all Christians in general and, we may infer, upon all of God's chosen servants in particular by the Apostle Jude when he exhorts the Christians to: "EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS".<sup>1</sup>

Two of the questions asked and Storaasli's answers were:

10. Is intinction permitted in unusual circumstances, such as a service on board ship in a rolling sea, or at a training center with large numbers of communicants and a limited time for service?

FOR CONVENIENCE - NO.  
IN EMERGENCIES - YES.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS IN HOLY COMMUNION BY THE INTINCTION METHOD IS NOT THE ACCEPTED PRACTICE IN OUR CHURCH.

16. A Lutheran Chaplain is given the responsibility for the total Sunday School on the base.  
a. May he enforce the use of the Unified Protestant curriculum - a conglomeration of materials picked from many denominations, but avowedly non-denominational - or should he encourage the use of Lutheran materials?

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHAPLAIN TO ASSURE HIMSELF THAT WHATEVER IS TAUGHT IN HIS SUNDAY SCHOOL IS BASED ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES. HE IS FREE AND SHOULD

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<sup>1</sup>"Memorandum to ELC Chaplains on EAD, Subject: SOLUTIONS TO SITUATIONS PROPOUNDED BY QUESTIONNAIRE: "QUESTIONS ON PROCEDURES OF INTEREST TO CHAPLAINS," MCC - Archives of the ELC.



FEEL FREE TO SUBSTITUTE OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL  
TO ACCOMPLISH THIS END.<sup>1</sup>

In 1959 Storaasli was extended a renewal of his Call to be Director of the MCC. In typical fashion he replied, "Still holding fast to my interpretation of the Call, that no pastor has a right to leave active service so long as his church has work for him to do, I accept the reappointment and if God so wills, will continue to serve until 31st December, 1960."<sup>2</sup>

During his last two years as director of the MCC, Storaasli was greatly occupied with the details of the upcoming merger of the ELC into the new ALC. In a letter to his counterpart in the old ALC, Dr. Lammert Redelfs, Storaasli discussed some details and then gave an extended reason for his feeling that the new church should have its own agency to maintain supervision over its chaplains. In his letter Storaasli also discussed what he thought was the chief weakness of the BSMP. Naturally the chief issue was the matter of the practice of administering Holy Communion:

"Past experience has indicated that the Bureau, due to no fault of its own, cannot serve two masters - liberal and conservative Lutheran Church bodies. I still feel that the administration and reception of Holy Communion in the Armed Forces is the most important facet of a Lutheran chaplain's ministry in proclaiming and upholding the Lutheran torch for all to see."

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<sup>1</sup>"Exhibit C, QUESTIONS ON PROCEDURES OF INTEREST TO CHAPLAINS," MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Storaasli to Dr. Schiotz, memo, 10 September 1959, F. A. Schiotz file, MCC - Archives of the ELC.



It was this weakness inherent in the Bureau of Service's supervision over its Chaplains which instigated the attached Memorandum on Holy Communion . . . I believe the cause of the TALC Military Chaplaincy will be judged by the company it keeps.<sup>1</sup>

However, the old patterns persisted into the new and the new ALC maintained its ties with the NLC, although within the ALC a successor agency to the MCC was formed, with Dr. V. T. Jordahl as its Director. The new agency was called "Service to Military Personnel."

As Schiotz was pondering the possibility and wisdom of having a successor to the MCC in the new church, he sent out a memorandum to a number of chaplains, both those who had returned to the parish ministry or other civilian pursuits and those who were currently on active duty. Their replies were almost unanimous in urging that a successor agency be formed. But in many cases their reasons for so feeling were really a reflection of their admiration for the person of Storaasli.

#### Comments about Storaasli and the MCC

John Blom, a 1956 graduate of the seminary who had immediately entered the Army chaplaincy and who was currently on active duty wrote:

It has given me a sense of pride when meeting other chaplains senior to me to have them ask, "Are you a Storaasli Lutheran or some other kind?" and in my contact with other Lutheran chaplains to hear them say, "Storaasli takes care of you men in the E.L.C.; he backs you up."

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<sup>1</sup>Gynther Storaasli to Lammert Redelfs, 16 December 1959,  
MCC - Archives of the ELC.



Yes, and he will back us up to the wall, when necessary, too.<sup>1</sup>

An Air Force chaplain who had served but two years, but who was to make the chaplaincy a career, Lyle Shaw, wrote of his appreciation for Storaasli and of the continued need for such an office as the MCC in the new church:

The swift, objective and sometimes unmercifully blunt replies to our letters from Chaplain Storaasli, the book which he sends each month, the open door we always find at his office when we get "To Town" all of them, and I could add more, constitute the need for such an office.

I must admit that much of Storassli's colorful personality and "Way With Men" has something to do with this, shall we say, attachment. But who is to say God cannot raise up another man in the "New church" to carry on in his magnificent manner. Chaplain Storaasli is a Pastor of us "Wandering Shepherds" and whether it be he or someone else, we need to feel the "Closeness" of the church in very way possible.<sup>2</sup>

Storaasli retired from active service in the church the same day the ELC ceased to exist as a separate institution, 31 December 1960. But before he left the offices of the MCC, he collected for the Archives of the church most of the papers and documents which related to the work of the chaplaincy.

The last year of his active service saw Storaasli as busy as ever. The writer of this thesis well remembers Storaasli's frequent visits to the seminary that year. And also remembered, with gratitude, is the patience and understanding with which Storaasli listened to and counseled with a young seminarian whose interest in the chaplaincy was encouraged by the grizzled old one-armed veteran.

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<sup>1</sup>Blom to Schiotz, 17 November 1959, F. A. Schiotz file, MCC - Archives of the ELC.

<sup>2</sup>Shaw to Schiotz, 3 December 1959, F. A. Schiotz file, MCC - Archives of the ELC.



Storaasli, Midboe, Ylvisaker, Larsen, and Stub, these were the men who had the patience and perseverance and who were primarily responsible for moving the NLCA/ELC from a response to emergency situations to a continuing involvement in the armed forces of the United States, especially in matters relating to chaplains.



## SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

By the end of 1960 the ELC was deeply involved in the affairs of the chaplaincy. One of its officials was a retired career chaplain. Many of its pastors had spent time on active duty as chaplains. More and more of its pastors were becoming in some way involved as members of the Reserve. Some of its seminary students were seriously considering making the chaplaincy a career. A number of young pastors were going on active duty for a two-year period of time and then returning to civilian life. In some cases these last mentioned would retain an affiliation with the military through the Reserve program. Church officials were being invited by the military to contribute to its religious program through such things as suggestions for appropriate curriculum to be used in chapels. And church leaders were being called upon to address and lead retreats of Lutheran chaplains and service people. The church had set up its own agency in order to deal with the needs of the chaplains. And the church, through an agency it had been instrumental in forming, was dealing in an official way with the policy of the government, particularly as such policy related to the religious needs and practices of military service people, including but not limited to the particular concerns of the Lutheran churches supporting that agency.



This paper has traced the history of how such things came to be. A brief recapitulation is in order at this point.

The Norwegian Lutheran Church of America (NLCA) was formed in the midst of World War I. At that time a great enthusiasm for the war was sweeping the country. Responding to the pressures of that enthusiasm, the church began seeking ways to effectively minister to the needs and opportunities of the time. In a short while the National Lutheran Commission For Soldiers' and Sailors' Welfare (NLCSSW) was organized. Two men especially became prominent in its work, J. A. O. Stub and Lauritz Larsen.

After the end of the "Great War" a period of great disillusionment set in. Although in many ways the NLC had become the successor to the NLCSSW, it did very little work with chaplains. For many years Gynther Storaasli was the lone NLCA clergyman on active duty as a chaplain, and to all intents and purposes he was a forgotten man, his ministry unknown, unrecognized and unappreciated.

The Depression era and the rise of totalitarian governments around the world stimulated an increasing interest in and appreciation for the chaplaincy. N. M. Ylvisaker began to publicize the chaplaincy and, just prior to World War II, became the energetic director of the SC.

During World War II chaplains of the church for the first time found themselves for the first time encountering avowed pagan, anti-christian cultures and at the same time, seeing the effective results of missionary work. An unprecedented



men ministered in an equally unprecedented number of military installations and chapels. The church for the first time had students at its seminary with some of their expenses being paid by the government with the expectation that they would upon graduation enter upon duty as Navy chaplains. Men such as Engebret Midboe, Orlando Ingvoldstad, and V. T. Jordahl all began their active duty involvement with the chaplaincy during this time. With numerous articles in the Lutheran Herald the church was made aware of the work of the chaplains and the need for more men to enter this field of ministry.

In the post-war years interest again rapidly waned. The church in 1946 changed its name to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC), thus culminating a long process of acculturation to the American society and ethos. Accepting the need for a continued relationship with the chaplaincy, however minimal its participation in the active duty program might be, the church in 1948 helped foster the formation of the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel (BSMP). Newly-retired Chaplain Storaasli became its distinguished executive secretary.

With the beginning of the Korean War the need for chaplains once again rapidly escalated. Seminary students, many of them veterans of World War II, urged the church to form an agency that would be responsible for chaplain procurement within the ELC. With alacrity the church responded. A short while after the formation of the Military Chaplains Commission (MCC), Storaasli was called to be its director. When he accepted, Midboe took his place at the BSMP.



In the last years of the existence of the ELC as a separate church body, the issue of communion practices of the chaplains came increasingly to the forefront. Lack of agreement between the MCC and the BSMP on this point was one of the factors that prohibited the publication of the BSMP of a proposed Lutheran Chaplains' Manual. But in many other ways the two agencies worked together to foster and maintain a high degree of involvement on the part of the church in the affairs of the military, especially as such affairs were related to and affected the chaplaincy.

Two unanswered questions, especially, arise from the developments that have just been highlighted.

One question has to do with the role of the chaplain. Just what sort of role does the church expect him/her to fulfill in ministering in a military context? In perhaps the classic work on the subject, retired Navy Chaplain Richard Hutcheson in his book, The Churches and the Chaplaincy, notes that;

Armed Forces have a character of their own. They are "total institutions," encompassing far more of a soldiers life than his 8-to-5 working hours, and they engender a strong sense of the difference between insiders and outsiders. They are also bureaucracies, and their organizational goals are quite different from the churches' goals of religious ministry. . . . (Some of the unique dimensions of the military ministry are that) . . . : It is a ministry to the entire institution - to a cross-section of the population, churched and unchurched alike. It is a young adult ministry, eighty percent of the military population being under thirty. It is a ministry characterized by a unique kind of mobility. And it is an ecumenical ministry, bringing together clergymen and churchmen of all denominations, and giving them opportunities to travel



all over the world.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this, just what does the Lutheran church expect of its chaplains? Are they to be pastors, concerned primarily with the needs of Lutheran personnel, extending to them a ministry of Word and Sacrament? This seemed to be the basic expectation in the beginning, in 1917, and even up to and including World War II. The justification that seems to have been advanced for the need of Lutheran chaplains was that it was "our boys" who were in the service and therefore they needed the ministrations of "our chaplains."

But chaplains found themselves in an environment where not only Lutheran men were present, but men were there who came from many different denominational backgrounds. Even Claus Clausen, in Civil War days, doubtless had other than just Lutheran men with whom to deal.

Chaplains themselves began to look at themselves as more than pastors. They were enablers, trying to stimulate the religious faith and practice of men - and women - to whom they ministered, no matter how diverse their religious preference and background.

But precisely this conception of themselves as enablers posed problems for Lutheran chaplains. The issue came to a head over the matter of communion practices. If a Lutheran chaplain could see his role as that of pastor, he could conceivably feel quite comfortable about limiting his administration of the communion to Lutheran participants only. But if the chaplain saw

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<sup>1</sup>(Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), p. 7.



himself as an enabler, he would at least be tempted to make access to the Lord's Supper more accessible to those with which he dealt, even if they were not avowedly Lutheran.

This was exactly the issue with which Storaasli was working. He himself came out of the most conservative of the three Norwegian-Lutheran churches that in 1917 had merged to form the new NLCA. He did not by any means want the Lutheran chaplains to limit their concern to those only of Lutheran profession. But at the same time he did want the chaplains to limit admittance to the Communion table to those who were willing to accept Lutheran teaching and practice. The writer shares Chaplain Storaasli's concern about who should be admitted to the Sacrament. But as Storaasli's statements indicate, not all chaplains agreed. Whether they would say so or not, their conception of their role differed from his.

And as other Lutheran chaplains began to make a lifetime career of service in the chaplaincy, another role possibility began to arise. Chaplains with many years of service in the military were tempted to look upon themselves as ministers of a religious military. They "service church," about which Midboe had spoken, was an indication of this possibility.

This leads to the second question that is raised by the matters that have been studied in this paper. Just how should chaplains deal with a situation in which many military people want to exercise their faith but have no connection with any civilian congregation? The lack of NLCA/ELC/ALC churches



precisely in many of those areas where many of those people live and serve has compounded the problem. Should Lutheran chaplains and service people strive to maintain their peculiar identity and practice in such an environment or not? Of interest here is a development that has taken place in at least the Navy. For years the navy chaplains had grouped themselves as Catholic, Protestant, or Jew. But in recent years another category, Orthodox, has been added. Among Protestants another two-fold division has been discussed, that of the so-called liturgical churches on the one hand and the non-liturgical on the other. In the environment where the majority of the Protestants seem to come from either a Methodist or a Southern Baptist background, the Lutheran chaplain can feel very lonely indeed. The writer recalls serving on an installation where 5,000 personnel were assigned and he was one of four chaplains. There were no ALC churches within a radius of 125 miles. He did not participate in the Protestant Communion Service, whenever it was held. Instead, with the gracious encouragement of the senior chaplain, a Methodist, the writer would have a separate Communion service for Lutheran personnel. An average of three people would attend such a service. Such facts make real the question of what role a Lutheran chaplain is expected by the church to play in the service.

There is a continuing challenge then for the chaplains and for the church. How and in what ways shall the church's chaplains minister faithfully as Lutherans in a pluralistic environment? That is, in what way shall Lutheran chaplains be Lutheran as they meet and minister to people who come from many



denominational backgrounds? It has been the experience of the writer that more and more service people are claiming no denominational background or allegiance at all. How then shall the church, especially through its chaplains, minister effectively to the military establishment? And shall that ministry be an ongoing commitment to a permanent institution? Or should the church and its clergy only seek to minister to the armed forces of the nation in a time of emergency, such as was the case for the most part of World War I and again in World War II? That is to say, should the church be only temporarily involved with a ministry to the military?

The church has apparently opted for a continuing commitment to ministry to the military. It has supported in varying degrees those of its clergy who have chosen to become military chaplains. And the church has not objected when some of those chaplains have spent twenty or more years on active duty in the military.

But it is doubtful whether the implications, meaning and consequences of such a commitment have been fully considered. How shall the church maintain its integrity in such a situation? Since the experiences of the Viet-Nam era such a question has become far more pointed than it was in 1960.

But even the events of the years 1917-1960 have raised the question.

When the NLCA was formed in 1917, it could not have foreseen how thoroughly it would become involved in the affairs of the military, especially that of the chaplaincy. The church's



response was in most instances an unplanned one. The remarkable thing is that so much was accomplished so well, in such a short time. One is simply amazed at the effort and skill exercised by such men of the church as Stub, Larsen, Storaasli, Ylvisaker, and Midboe. Their work may not have been appreciated by many at the time, but it was to have significant effects on both the church and the military. Within the church the result was that by the time of the formation of the new ALC in 1961, the chaplaincy was accepted as a normal part of the church's life, and agencies were functioning to foster and maintain that work. As the writer himself experienced, during the sixties enough pastors volunteered to become chaplains to more than fulfill the quotas assigned to the church. And one of the effects of the church upon the chaplaincy is cited by Applequist:

One of the good fruits of the participation of conservative church bodies in the chaplaincy program during the past 20 years is that their doctrinal position and practice have become generally known and respected. The result has been that the regulations themselves have been expanded to include additional safeguards for churches and chaplains with strongly confessional standards and practices. One of the regulations, for example, which has been added to the Navy manual since World War II is the following on Holy Communion:

The Navy Department allows chaplains perfect freedom of conscience with respect to the matter of "closed" ("close") or "open" communion. In order to meet the religious needs of officers, and men, it is expected that the chaplain will provide opportunity for them to partake of communion, or, when this ministry is limited by the chaplain's own conscience, the regulations of his church, or by the custom or conscience of officers and men, he will exercise every effort to arrange for the service of communion to be conducted by chaplains or civilian clergymen of other faiths.

(Chaplains' Manual (Navy), par. 4102, p. 24).



Similar provisions are made in the Army and Air Force manuals.<sup>1</sup>

Whether or not the church's response to the needs of the military, particularly as those needs found focus in its chaplains, was the right one, remains for the Lord of the church to decide. Certainly that response was a remarkable one. Its leaders may not always have acted wisely or well, but to the best of their abilities they did act, for their consecrated service the church can be grateful.

Questions, problems and opportunities also in the limited area of service in the military still lie before the church. But much solid work has been done in the past. "Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest that he send forth laborers into the harvest, for the fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few." Laborers may be available today, but the question as to how such laborers shall do their work in the military, and with what tools, still remains to be answered by the church.

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<sup>1</sup>Applequist, p. 86.



TABLE 1

ACTIVITY OF ELC CHAPLAINS FOR YEARS 1955-1960 PRIOR TO ACTIVE DUTY, AND NUMBER REMAINING AS CAREER CHAPLAINS EACH YEAR

Year	Seminary	Parish	Remaining as Career Chaplains
1955	8	3	3
1956	14	4	4
1957	4	5	7
1958	6	2	1
1959	5	1	4
1960	4	1	3



TABLE 2

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CHAPLAINS OF NLCA/ELC  
WITH BRANCH AND YEARS OF SERVICE

Name	Branch of Service	Years Served
Abramson, Walter M.	Army	44-46
Allison, Harold M.	Army	41-46
Amundson, James M.	Navy	44-46
Anderson, Bjarna T.	Navy	44-46
Anderson, Carroll N.	Air Force	52-59
Anderson, Christian O.	Army	35-38, 41-46
Anderson, Norman G.	Navy	43-45
Aronsen, Viggo	Army	51-54
Ause, O. Craig	Air Force	60-63
Ausland, Donald E.	Army	54-56
Baalson, Elmo O.	Navy	44-46
Barstad, Stuart E.	Air Force	55-
Belgium, Gerhard L.	Army	42-45
Benson, W. C.	Army	4?
Berg, George K.	Navy	43-46
Berg, Harvey M.	Army	54-56, 61-62
Bergeland, Luther C.	Army	52-53
Blom, John O.	Army	56-
Blucher, Donald P.	Army	58-69
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## APPENDIX

### A Document from the Mid-1950's

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#### THE CHAPLAIN AND HIS RELATIONSHIP TO HIS CHURCH BODY

When I received the invitation from your Chaplain Secretaries, Ahl and Midboe, to introduce the announced topic I am afraid that I was a little too quick on the draw in accepting the assignment. I no sooner had given my consent then I realized I should have asked for time to consider the request.

There is no doubt but that an open and frank discussion of this subject matter can be very interesting and profitable, too, for our Lutheran souls, but it can also become quite disagreeable, provocative and argumentative as I found out when preparing this paper. I found myself arguing quite heatedly with myself on several occasions before I realized what I was doing.

Now in fairness to myself and to make doubly certain that I would not get off the beam I took the precaution to ask both Secretaries what they had in mind, specifically, to be discussed when assigning the topic. But as is so often true of executive secretaries - they were of no help. Both admitted that they did not have the answers, but were kind enough to come out with this helpful suggestion: Just go ahead and discuss The Relationship of the Chaplain to his Church Body.

It is a foregone conclusion that not all of you will agree with what I may have to say; some of you will no doubt disagree with what I say more violently than others; some of you may even get mad; no one will object to that provided that you watch your blood pressure. But whether or not we see eye to eye on the main issues discussed in the presentation of this paper bear in mind that the purpose of this discussion is: 1. To seek or explore the possibilities of attaining a more uniform practice among our Lutheran Chaplains in the Armed Forces; 2. To uphold and safe-



guard the historical as well as the traditional position our church has held down through the ages; 3. To encourage and strengthen each other to hold the line of Lutheran doctrine and practice when pressure from within or without tempts us to compromise or forsake our Lutheran position.

If through this discussion we shall be able to stiffen the Lutheran spine where stiffening is needed we may be of some help to a brother chaplain who finds himself in the position of the one who recently stated as a reason for his wanting to get out of the service, quote: "I am afraid I will become just a Protestant Chaplain and not a Lutheran if I stay in."

I, perhaps, in self defense had better state also that anything I say, however badly put, however badly it sounds, however critical its implication may seem it is not so bad as you may think. I assure you there is nothing personal, however personal it may sound. If when I have finished you feel like taking a poke at me, be sure it is only with your tongue.

But it is nice talking to you chaplains again, so I shall get to the assigned task.

The subject matter was given to me last February, in a letter dated the 14th to be exact, and there has hardly been a day since that this topic has not been in my mind more or less. I finally decided that the best way to present the topic: THE CHAPLAIN'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIS CHURCH BODY was to approach it from three viewpoints:

1. From the viewpoint of the Chaplain's CHURCH MEMBERSHIP.
2. From the viewpoint of his OBLIGATION TO ABIDE BY THE DOCTRINAL TENETS AND ESTABLISHED PRACTICES OF HIS CHURCH BODY.
3. From the viewpoint of the SUPERVISORY AUTHORITY DELEGATED BY HIS CHURCH TO ITS ENDORSING AGENCY.

#### FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CHAPLAIN'S CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The Military Chaplaincy as such has no effect on the chaplain's church body membership. If a candidate seeks appointment to the military chaplaincy to get release from ecclesiastical bondage or considers the military chaplaincy as an open door to ecclesiastical freedom in both doctrine and practice then there is something wrong with such a candidate's current church affiliation. What he should seek is not the chaplaincy, but membership in some other church body.

When you were appointed a military chaplain it was not because you were warm and breathing, a living soul, in possession of



all your senses, physically, well set-up; mentally, well equipped; educationally, well trained; and ecclesiastically in good standing; but because you happened to be a Lutheran, a pastor in good standing in the Lutheran Church. Since it was your Lutheran Church membership which qualified you for appointment, why should it be considered a strange thing, or an unreasonable thing, if the Armed Forces, the Offices of the Chiefs of Chaplains, your own church body, and not least, your own endorsing agency, should expect you not to treat your church membership lightly, or forget its legitimate demands and your obligations thereto?

Let us, therefore, at this point review for your common good some elemental and fundamental facts your church membership emphasizes, and which should be remembered if you are to maintain the right relationship with her.

When you were ordained your name was entered upon the clergy roster of your Church. So long as your name appears on the clergy roster it is an indication to the world that you are a pastor in good standing in the ministerium of your church body. The first fact to note is this: When you entered the chaplaincy your name was not removed from the clergy roster. The second fact: That you are still regarded as a pastor in good standing, not in name only, but in faith, doctrine, life and practice also.

While the military chaplaincy, if on active duty, removes you beyond the immediate jurisdiction and supervision of your church, it does not release you from the duties and obligations of membership. While on active duty in the chaplaincy you should as far as it is humanly possible keep in contact with your church; subscribe for and read her journals, periodicals and news releases; attend your district pastoral conferences, and district and church conventions. If you cannot attend your district pastoral conferences or Synodical Conventions notify the District, Synod or comparable president; send greetings to the convention or conference; express regret for your absence and ask to be excused. Correspondence of such a kind will keep your name before your conference brethren and in their remembrance.

If you have any literary contribution to make submit it to your church paper; any knowledge, experience, or what not, worthy to be shared with fellow church members, do not keep them to yourself.

As the time draws near for the expiration of your tour of active duty write to your District or Synodical President, confer with him about the matter of extending or not extending your category commitment; and if your decision is to seek release from active duty - notify the appropriate church office of your impending release.



By approving your application for appointment as a chaplain and subsequent call to extended active duty your church merely loaned you and your services to your country for a time. Since district or synodical membership is not involved or affected in any way by your entrance into the active chaplaincy you still belong to the church when released from active duty. And in my humble opinion no chaplain whose category commitment is drawing to a close has any personal or ecclesiastical right to make any decision regarding his future actions, not involving the parish ministry or related activity, without first conferring with the appropriate church officials. All released chaplains in my book are in duty bound to place themselves at the service of their church before embarking on a course of action of their own choosing and design.

#### THE CHAPLAIN'S OBLIGATION TO ABIDE BY THE DOCTRINAL TENETS AND PRACTICES OF HIS CHURCH

Let us now consider our subject matter from: The Viewpoint of the Chaplain's Obligation to Abide by the Doctrinal Tenets and Practices of His Church.

So long as you are a member of the Lutheran Church, you are obligated to be a loyal and faithful representative of the church body you call your own in her teaching and in her practice. There is no freedom granted anyone of you, as far as I know, in this area of your chaplain ministry.

If you do not want to be distinctively Lutheran in your teaching, preaching, administration of the sacraments and practice in general, then you have no business calling or claiming yourself to be a Lutheran, much less serving in the chaplaincy under the Lutheran Church quota. It was your membership in the Lutheran Church which made you eligible for appointment. While your military authority to serve as a military chaplain came with your commission as an officer, your authority to function in the Armed Forces as a duly ordained clergyman came from your church denomination, and in this connection I cannot do any better than to quote verbatim from the pamphlet "Denominational Coverage Requirements". (Approved by the Chiefs of Chaplains of the Army and Air Forces and concurred in, I believe, by the Chief of Chaplains of the Navy.)

"Your religious authority does not exceed that which your denomination gives you. Denominational limitations or religious authority cannot be removed by military command or military necessity. You do not have a moral right to perform a religious function which your denomination does not authorize you to perform, or in the performance of any function to transgress the religious authority imparted to you by your denomination." So far the quotation.



When you were endorsed ecclesiastically for the chaplaincy your Church Body went on record that you were an ordained minister of the Lutheran Church in good standing. But while the ecclesiastical endorsement emphasized or emphasizes the current standing of your church membership, it also signifies that so long as you are in the chaplaincy you are under the discipline of the Church Body which endorsed you.

Your Church Body, like God, did not surrender its claim upon you when she approved your coming into the chaplaincy. She relinquished her immediate supervision over your time and activities, but in so doing transferred this responsibility to an agency of her own choosing such as the Armed Services Commission and the Bureau of Service to Military Personnel. But in surrendering her immediate supervision over you as a pastor, she did not thereby present you with a blanket authority to teach, preach and practice as you might see fit, but expected and expects each of you to abide by the foundation principles within the framework of which the Lutheran Church has always worked.

I do not believe it was the intention of your two Executive Secretaries that I should spell out in detail what you can and cannot do to maintain proper acceptable relationship with your Church Body, but merely to indicate the areas wherein the most frequent and flagrant non-Lutheran attitudes manifest themselves.

Before I continue let us get something straight. I am neither a theologian nor a dogmatist (I could not find the word "Dogmatician" in my dictionary) and if anything I say in the next few seconds should indicate that I have any learnings in that direction forget it. I most likely stole the thunder from a recognized theologian, without knowing what he was talking about. However, Editor Malmin of the Lutheran Herald back in 1940 wrote an editorial in which he stated: "The Lutheran Church has always worked within the frame-work of three fundamental principles:

1. "Everything which is taught and practiced must be in the strictest accord with the Word of God."
2. Holy Scripture is correctly interpreted in the Confessional writings of the Lutheran Church.
3. God's Word is interpreted in accordance with the Confessions of the Church must be put into practice in conformity with recognized Lutheran usage."

How do you in your preaching, teaching and practical chaplain's ministry fit into the framework of these fundamental principles of sound Lutheranism? Especially the last eleven words of the last stated principle: "God's Word interpreted in accordance with the Confessions of the Church must be put into practice in conformity with recognized Lutheran usage."



There in a nutshell, and a very small one at that, you have set before you as a Lutheran Chaplain how you can and should maintain the correct relationship with your Church Body.

This brings us to that area in your practical chaplain ministry where some chaplains most frequently fail to maintain the desired relationship with their church bodies; namely, the area of Altar and Pulpit Fellowship with non-Lutheran Chaplains. In this area there is only one person who can get himself into an untenable Lutheran position and that is the chaplain himself. This was not always true of the military chaplaincy, but it is today.

One of my younger chaplains, for instance, informed me that he had participated in a service with non-Lutheran Chaplains, not because he wanted to do so, but the tone of the directive suggesting that he do so was such in content and implied threat that he thought he had better comply to protect the good name of his church.

It was wrong in my opinion for this young chaplain to participate in that joint service if for no other reason than that he, himself, thought it wrong to do so. He needed not have been disturbed by the tone of the directive his senior chaplain had given him. Since his participation involved a joint religious service with a chaplain of a different denomination he had the military and God-given right to refuse compliance. No chaplain by regulation in any one of the three branches of the Armed Forces is or can be required to conduct or officiate jointly in a religious service with a chaplain or civilian clergyman of another denomination.

This young chaplain failed not only himself - since he acted against his conscience, let us say, but he also failed his Church. His fear of the consequence had he stayed away led him to ignore the position his church has traditionally demanded of her pastors.

Our church's traditional position in this area of fellowship has been: "There is room for a large measure of cooperation in externals with non-Lutherans which need not involve the principles of spiritual fellowship so long as there is no compromise of divine truth." "But where the establishment and maintenance of church fellowship ignores present doctrinal differences or declares them a matter of indifference, there is Unionism, or a pretense of union which does not exist."

Unionism, involving spiritual fellowship with non-Lutherans, is "poison" as far as our church is concerned. We cannot maintain proper relationships with our church body if we despise



or ignore her traditional position in this area.

If we are not in sympathy with our church's position as set forth in the principles of the Galesburg Rule: "Lutheran pulpits for Lutheran ministers only; Lutheran altars for Lutheran communicants only" we have the privilege of trying to persuade our church to change her position. If we succeed well and good, if not, then we must fall in line with her position and edict. If we cannot abide or comply with her stand on these principles there is no one forcing us to remain in the chaplaincy as a representative of the Lutheran Church. Here is it not a question of religious liberty, but a question of religious integrity. Our slogan should always be: Lutheran Chaplains for the Lutheran Chaplaincy only.

Other areas of the chaplain's activities wherin the Lutheran chaplain should maintain his Church's position and thus safeguard his relationship with her centers in and around - Open and Closed Communion - referred to in the Galesburg Rule - and the ignoring or playing loose with the requirement which the Lutheran Church imposes upon its pastors and chaplains to ascertain if they are permitted to perform the ministerial or pastoral acts requested by them. Here again the chaplain, before a decision is made, like a good Lutheran will obey God rather than man and do nothing which will reflect adversely upon the traditional position of his Church lest he be guilty of delinquency in fulfilling the self-imposed obligations his church membership entails.

In concluding this section on the chaplain's obligation to abide by the doctrinal and established practices of his Church I cannot forego expressing my amazement at any Lutheran Chaplain who wants to be a Lutheran in name and church affiliations, but appears to be more or less in a state of rebellion against the demands his church makes upon him.

The 64,000 dollar question will remain unanswered in my opinion until such a chaplain comes to his senses, resigns his current church membership and seeks admission in a church haven which is not so hard on his spiritual and physical blood pressure.

#### THE SUPERVISORY AUTHORITY DELEGATED TO THE CHURCH AGENCY BY HIS CHURCH BODY

The third section of The Chaplain's Relationship With His Church Body will be looked at from the Viewpoint of the Supervisory Authority Delegated To Its Church Agency By His Church Body.

While the spelled-out duties and functions of the Armed Services Commission, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and The Bureau



of Services to Military Personnel, National Lutheran Council, may differ a little in their details the basic purposes of their establishment, duties and functions, responsibilities and mission are to all intents and purposes the same. Let us say that their primary mission is to build up and maintain and supervise an adequate, efficient and effective Corps of Lutheran Chaplains for all branches of the Armed Forces and their components in behalf of their respective church bodies. All related activities in connection with this mission can be left to your imagination without the necessity for further elucidation of the problems incident to operation and administration.

It is necessary, however, to remind you, each one of you, that the degree of success or failure in accomplishing the primary mission imposed upon these two agencies by their respective church bodies will be in direct ratio to your understanding of their duties and functions and the spirit of cooperation you give them in order to maintain your relationship with your church body.

If it is important that you as an active duty chaplain maintain relationship with your church body then it is doubly important that you maintain this relationship by and through the agency your church body has set up and maintains in order that she may serve you more effectively.

Remember this - your Executive Secretaries have their work cut out for them in the broader fields of the military chaplaincy: such as carrying on studies of the military training programs in general; maintaining friendly and official relationship with the offices of the three Chiefs of Chaplains; and through these agencies study the military programs as they affect you chaplains; evaluate the specialized training programs for chaplains as incorporated in the Chaplain Schools' curricula and seek first hand information relative to current changes in regulations, policies, and procedures affecting the military chaplaincy. They must also establish and maintain cordial and cooperative relationships with other church endorsing agencies; study their programs and policies as they pertain to the chaplaincies; and to serve as a clearing house for all inquiries regarding any phase of the Lutheran Church, its organizations, its doctrines, its practice, or what have you. And as though this were not enough, to ride herd on all you gentlemen; listen to your complaints, gripes and troubles; commend you when you have done outstanding work; and evaluate the effectiveness of your chaplain's spiritual ministry through the study and interpretation of the entries made on your monthly reports.

While I have first hand knowledge of the joys, sorrows and headaches inherrent in the offices of our two Executive Secretaries, I also have first hand knowledge how they could render more efficient and helpful service to you chaplains in the field and how you



could help them to do so. All you would need do is to remember constantly that since you are in the chaplaincy and the church has established these agencies to help you do your task more effectively it is your bounden and obligated duty to maintain your relationship with your church body through the fullest cooperation on your part with these agencies.

As the liaison agencies between you and your church their directives, requests, policies and regulations represent the will of your church and are therefore yours to heed whether you like it or not. Your church membership gives you no choice in the matter. No one can compel you to obey - if you insist upon being childishly stubborn about it. If you are that childish you should not be in the chaplaincy. Your agency could pick you up and spank you, (which in times past I was tempted to do) by suggesting to the chaplain's church body the withdrawal of his endorsement. I am sure such a spanking action would have a salutary effect on other stubborn chaplains.

There are not many hairs left on my chest so I am soon through. However, there is one which still irritates after almost three years out of Washington, D.C. because it is so deeply ingrown. This one concerns the matter of monthly reports.

The purpose of the chaplain's monthly report of activities is to maintain closer contact between you and your endorsing agencies. Through the medium of these reports the Executive Secretaries are able to find ways and means of serving you more effectively; to keep your chaplain ministry before their church bodies and from the annual consolidated reports of your activities impress upon their church leaders and church people in general that the Armed Forces of our country is today one of the most vital mission fields of the church in America.

I doubt if there has been any one factor which has contributed so much to the elevation of the military chaplaincy as a vital arm of the church's spiritual ministry to the thinking or estimation of the church at large, our own Lutheran church bodies in particular, than the data culled from the monthly reports of chaplains, tabulated and made available to the church bodies. For how in the world could the church be made aware of the great number of immortal souls in the Armed Forces which are touched by the chaplains each year - or have any idea of the tremendous spiritual impact made each year by you "soldiers of God in uniform" unless this data can and could be made available to them from the chaplain's monthly reports?

And yet from the difficulty our Secretaries have in persuading some of you to be faithful and prompt in submitting your monthly reports one can not at times understand how the delinquent



chaplain can be so "dumb" as not to understand the important part these reports play in the whole chaplain program, or if they do, why they set themselves up as a law unto themselves and in a spirit which cannot be classified as Christian choose to adopt a wilful, obstinate and uncooperative attitude toward a requirement their Church has imposed upon them.

I do not mind confessing at this late date that the occasions were not infrequent when I felt that the Secretaries should have the authority or power to "mete out punishment commensurate with the crime" upon these wilful delinquents. No chaplain who fails to submit his report of monthly activities promptly to his endorsing agency can possibly be said to maintain the desired relationship with his church body.

I feel better now. That last ingrown hair has been removed. Before I say, "Thanks for listening", I would like to make one last observation which is not directly at anyone in particular but which can be classified as "thinking out loud", but which I believe has much food for thought in this connection.

From inquiries and observations made of other church agencies within our own church bodies I have come to the conclusion that our military chaplains are the greatest sinners in the matter of not maintaining desired relationship with their church bodies. Seeking to know just why this should be so, I came upon another interesting fact: Namely, that of all the clergymen of the church engaged in some phase of the spiritual ministry outside the parish ministry, our military chaplains are the only ones who need not depend upon their church body for their pay and subsistence. I am only wondering if this circumstance could possibly have any bearings on the quality and quantity of the relationship they maintain with their church bodies. If there be any virtue in what has been said, think on these things.



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